

Staging “the Drama”: The Continuing Importance of Cultural Tourism in the Gaming Era

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ABSTRACT

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(Under the direction of Valerie Lambert, Michael Lambert, Patricia Sawin, Christopher Nelson, and John Jackson)

Issues of indigenous self-representation are of major concern for U.S. tribal nations. For the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) self-representation has meant refashioning the way they are portrayed in a major theatrical production on their reservation. My dissertation investigates the reinvention of the outdoor drama *Unto These Hills*, produced 1950-2004 in Cherokee, North Carolina, by the White dominated Cherokee Historical Association (CHA) and the role of the EBCI in exerting tribal sovereignty over the formerly non-Indian controlled institutions which produce representations of their history and culture for tourists. In 2006, under Cherokee management, the fifty-seven year old drama was transformed into *Unto These Hills... a Retelling*. My research explores the social conflicts, negotiations, creative processes and performances surrounding this change as the tribe steered its most public representation of the past from a narrative of accommodation to one of Cherokee nationalism.

This study makes a significant contribution to the history of the EBCI, focusing on the relationships between tribal government and the business of tourism within the broader context of social change on the reservation since the advent of Indian gaming. From the rise

of the railroads and highways that laid the foundations for a tourism boom in the 1950s, to the drama's contemporary role within a reservation-wide program for tribal economic development, cultural tourism has been important in the construction of contemporary Cherokee subjectivities and part of a process of Cherokee nation building. As such, the drama is also a source of friction among its multiple audiences who contest each other's authority to authenticate its narratives of the past. Through ethnography my research will elucidate the agency of display as social process. From the ruin of the old CHA to the political maneuvers that sculpted the re-writing of the script and the tribal and federal policies that set the transformation in motion, it is this process of staging the drama, as much as the performance itself, that best illustrates what it means to be Cherokee in the twenty-first century.

For Jessica, Marisol, Graciela, and Charlotte

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A Nation and its Drama

It is June 2006 and I am among the latest additions to the newly re-staffed Cherokee Historical Association. As I work in the front office pursuing my research I am also expected to aid in the day to day affairs of the business. In retrospect perhaps I was a bit naïve as I would occasionally answer the phone only to be astonished at the questions tourists would ask me. I told Linda West, our executive assistant, that one day I took a telephone call where the person asked, “Do they still have Indians you can take your picture with?”

Linda is a non-Indian but her spouse and children are tribal members. She is also native of western North Carolina and so reflected on her life’s experience in the mountains, “Cherokee has changed a great deal. A long time ago there were chiefs on every corner wearing headdresses. People had bears in cages on the side of the road. There was never an ethical thought like should a bear be in a little cage like that or is that really the way the Cherokee were. People were just like, ‘Oh we saw a bear. We had our pictures taken with an Indian.’”

That summer one of the CHA’s most pressing concerns was audience reception of *Unto These Hills... a Retelling*, the newly revamped version of a historical outdoor drama the CHA has managed since 1950. This season is unique in that for the first time in the production’s history tribal members are in control. With the help of Indians of other tribes the

Cherokees have worked to rewrite and re-present the display of history and culture the drama provides. However not everyone in the audience, tourist or local, is pleased with the effort. Linda in her invocation of the “old” Cherokee reckoned that people with these memories were the ones most disappointed with the new drama.

Linda took her share of unusual phone calls too. One caught my attention as I eavesdropped. Even James Bradley, the CHA’s executive director, conspicuously came out of his office to use the copier by her desk while he listened too. Afterwards Linda told us the story.

“The lady said, ‘We were at the show two weeks ago and we didn’t like it. Then we heard that you’re bringing back the old show. If that’s true then we’d like to bring our family back.’

So I said, ‘No ma’am we’re not going back to the old show.’

And the lady says, ‘Well when are you going back to the old show?’

‘The old show is not coming back. There were just too many inaccuracies in it.’ And I told her how the current show will run for a few years then another show might begin when they’re ready to tell a new story. But in no way will the old show come back.’”

The emergence of the tourist economy in Cherokee, North Carolina

There are three federally recognized Cherokee tribes: the United Keetoowah Band, the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The EBCI’s status as a separate political entity dates to at least 1868 when it was first recognized by the

U.S. government by an act of Congress. However there are many questions historians continue to wrestle with concerning the origin of this political body, including whether to privilege the Treaties of 1817 and 1819 or the act of Removal in 1838 as the formative moment. According to King (1979) the Treaties of 1817 and 1819 signify a political break when the Cherokee Nation ceded land in North Carolina to the United States in exchange for land occupied by Cherokees in Arkansas Territory. After the land swap some Cherokees in North Carolina chose not to leave their land and take up residence with the main body of the Cherokee Nation, which lay to the south in what is today Georgia and Alabama, while some southlanders chose to relocate to North Carolina. When resistance to Removal failed and the Cherokee Nation was held to the Treaty of New Echota and forced west along the Trail of Tears, the North Carolina Cherokee would contend that they were not part of the Nation and hence should not have to migrate west. Meanwhile refugees of Removal escaped to the Smoky Mountains and remained there hiding from the U.S. Cavalry under the command of General Winfield Scott who would reason that, given the rugged terrain, it was not worth the cost of rounding them up. The North Carolina Cherokee would absorb the refugees of Removal and these two bodies together would constitute the new Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. In 1875 there was a full survey of the Qualla Boundary, Indian land that had been purchased by Will Thomas using Indian money (Finger 1984). Although the federal government would continue to propound the benefits of moving the tribe to Indian Territory throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century the EBCI would no longer be under realistic threat of forced removal. Shortly thereafter in 1885 Bureau of American Ethnology researcher James Mooney began his work with the Eastern Band which would culminate in his landmark publication *Myths of the Cherokee*.

The Eastern Band's earliest foray into tourism might be the first Fall Indian Festival held in 1914. Of course the Cherokee had been enmeshed in trade networks with neighboring Whites since the colonial era, but this festival was held in hopes of attracting non-local White customers, tourists. The success of the first fair was repeated in following years, each year drawing larger crowds (Finger 1991). Cherokee crafts, basketry in particular, were the centerpieces of these fairs which were well enough attended to receive press in Asheville newspapers (Hill 1997). Cherokee cultural distinctiveness and non-Indian curiosity in that difference guaranteed that among the possible varieties and themes of tourism the reservation would develop as a destination for "cultural tourism." The tourist market in Cherokee crafts did not grow in a vacuum, but alongside the development of regional tourism in and around the Asheville area. The tourist market was also cultivated by U.S. Indian policy and public land management, most significantly in the creation of the Smoky Mountains National Park in 1933. With the reservation serving as the park's eastern entrance Cherokee's status as a tourist destination was solidified. This manipulation of public and Indian land echoes Spence's thesis that "the creation of the first national parks coincided with efforts to restrict Indians to reservations and assimilate them into American society" (1999:4).

The creation of the Smoky Mountains National Park also coincided with John Collier's takeover of Indian Affairs as he and his cadre of reformers set about reversing the course of U.S. Indian policy. Their changes were manifest most profoundly through the Indian Reorganization Act which affirmed the legitimacy of tribal ownership of land (Prucha 1985). Regardless of Collier's reformist intentions for many Indians the notion that their land would be transmitted to the tribe and not their heirs upon their death was very unattractive. Biolsi (1992) documents how after reorganizing under the IRA some tribes were dissatisfied

with its implementation and factions formed to petition for a return to the pre-IRA framework despite its obviously oppressive structure. Among the EBCI factionalism erupted as the possibility of allotment remained attractive for some and while the Cherokees wrestled with themselves, as well as the park, the state, and the railroad companies, a transportation infrastructure slowly emerged in the 1940s that would lay the groundwork for a boom in tourism following World War II (Finger 1991).

It was after the war that Cherokee tourism grew from a small scale operation catering mostly to adventurers and elites to a mass destination for the American middle class in the 1950s and 1960s. The most significant development in the massification of Cherokee tourism is the creation of the historical outdoor drama, *Unto These Hills*, which opened a smashing success in the summer of 1950. Following on the heels of *Unto These Hills* was another popular Cherokee cultural attraction Oconaluftee Indian Village. With the opening of “the drama” and “the village,” as they are known locally, the 1950s brought rapid economic change for the EBCI continuing throughout the 1960s. Tourism provided a modicum of economic success for those fortunate enough to own shops and hotels and it provided much needed cash to seasonal employees in the service sector. Gulick (1973 [1960]) estimates the average Cherokee annual income in the 1950s in the range of 20% the national average, while Neely (1973) estimates that income rising to about 60% the national average by the early 1970s. Stucki (1984) proposes that this economic growth can be traced to U.S. abandonment of the failed policy of termination in the late 1960s after which corporate investors became less skittish about investing in reservation tourism. It was after this change in federal policy that the Eastern Band received a massive influx of capital in the early 1970s, leading to the construction of amusement parks, campgrounds, and name-brand hotels.

Laboring in a tourist economy

Despite these successes winter times were still lean and most households relied on multiple sources of income to supplement their summertime tourism wages. Tourism brought with it a different kind of work from what Cherokees had previously experienced. Although Cherokees had been enmeshed in wage labor, especially timber, road construction, and dam work for decades, tourism engendered a completely different work experience. Figuratively, this shift in labor conditions among the Cherokees in the middle and late twentieth century mirrors a broader transformation in the United States as a whole. Relations between workers and the workplace changed from the classic early and middle twentieth century model due in large part to a shift in global capitalism theorized as post-industrialism and post-Fordism (Nash 1995). Unlike industrial capitalism, these newer capitalist forms feature decentralization of production, use of “flexible” workforces, and acceleration of transportation and communication to yield a space-time compression of “just-in-time” production and delivery (Harvey 1990).

For the Cherokee worker, as for Americans more generally, one of the most fundamental changes in this transformation of global capitalism has been the normalization of service sector work, an environment which lends itself to a very different set of workplace experiences and meanings than work in an industrial setting (Macdonald and Sirianni 1996). From waiting tables to staffing hotels, service sector work requires something largely absent from industrial work: controlled presentation of affect or “emotional labor” (Hochschild 1979, 1985). The ability of workers to produce the right kind of affect to fit the situation,

“customer service,” is another means by which companies can differentiate their products from similar ones. Thus the commercialization of emotion in the service sector can be seen as part of the trend in historical capitalism towards the “commodification of everything” (Wallerstein 2003 [1983]). Since labor in the service sector involves a particular kind of power dynamic it is important to consider some theories of the power relations inherent in cultural tourism before moving into an elaboration on the development of Indian gaming on the Cherokee reservation.

Theorizing tourism and the politics of display

The transformation of global capitalism and the politics of emotional labor in the service sector are epitomized best by tourism, as the quality of the social interaction with the host is part of the product being consumed by the guest (Urry 2002). For the purposes of this study, tourism is distinguished as leisure travel from “home” to some destination and then return, but people travel for many reasons in the United States. Contemporary life in the U.S. mandates travel and transience for some, and the roadside motel serves as a ubiquitous sign for that constant movement (Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers 1996). Some enact mobility with ease, while threatening forces coerce others to flee, but both find temporary homes in the hotel, making it an exciting case study in the circulation of peoples and practices (Clifford 1997). However, not everyone who walks through the halls of hotels and motels is just passing through: the workers, if they are locals, remain fixed, while seasonal help may be more transient. Like other service workers, hotel workers are required to engage guests in affective relationships, helping to sustain a fantasy of leisure (Adler and Adler 2004). Choice of hotel

and destination can reflect the social class of tourists, as in luxury resorts where customers engage the hotel staff in classed performances that are an extension of the guests' class aspirations and expectations of being pampered (Sherman 2003). Workers in casinos, like many others whose wages are mostly tips, have to balance guests desires with management demands, and all under the watchful eye of surveillance cameras (Sallaz 2002). In destinations where the tourist theme includes the cultural identity of the locals, hosts may be expected to perform certain ethnic or racial differences (Nash 1989). Indeed, I have observed guests at Harrah's Cherokee Casino Hotel quizzing the housekeepers on the process of electing tribal councilmen and distributing per capita checks. What all of these examples from the tourism industry point to is the power of the gaze to discipline the social exchange between host and guest (Foucault 1995) and the necessity of the host to adapt by performing a controlled "presentation of self" (Goffman 1959).

This fundamental power struggle between hosts and guests has led MacCannell (1976) to argue that since the tourists represent an intrusion into the lives of the hosts, the hosts will create backstage areas off limits to tourists. Over time access to the backstage comes to be associated with access to authenticity so that they, too, become appropriated by tourism as contrived backstages, producing a "staged authenticity." The theory of staged authenticity is often used in tourism studies to explain the commodification and appropriation of host cultures, especially in areas where tourism has recently arrived or has rapidly escalated to a massive scale. However staged authenticity has significant limitations because of these very premises, which result in a de-emphasis on the history of the host population. This can be demonstrated by considering the issue of cultural appropriation in scholarship by and about American Indians: intrusive demands for authenticity predate tourism. From the

transformation of native crafts for a white market in the eighteenth century (Phillips 1998), to the wild west shows at the end of the nineteenth century (Kasson 2000), and motion pictures in the twentieth century (Kilpatrick 1999) Whites have long employed natives to act out White fantasies. These imagined representations of Indians are gendered in powerful ways (Bird 2001) and reflect the social construction of whiteness as well (King and Springwood 2001). Ultimately the manipulation of imagined Indians has been a tool of American nation building (Huhndorf 2001) and not surprisingly Whites, from the Boston Tea Party to the Boy Scouts to Deadheads, have taken the performance into their own hands by “playing Indian” themselves (Deloria 1998). With the onset of American industrial modernity, Indian play came to serve a purpose in the search for an authentic and meaningful social identity in the face of modernity’s uncertainties, especially in urban environments. Playing Indian came to resonate with what Jacobson (2000) has called “barbarian virtues” or the notion that by encountering the primitive, there could be a symbolic exchange where America would send the Other on the path to modernity and development, while the primitive would somehow teach America to restore that which it had lost because of modernity and development.

What this means for research in Cherokee on tourism is that we must recognize that the act of displaying culture and history for tourists is anything but straight-forward. We must theorize “what it means to show” by considering the politics of display in the live performances by natives for tourists (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). Some have argued that live Indian performances for tourists should be seen as a elevation of the tourists’ culture and subordination of the native performer who resists domination through the preservation of tradition (Johnson and Underiner 2001). Such findings are part of a larger pattern apparent among workers in the service sector more generally (Tucker 1993). Subordinated people may

lack the means to confront their superiors directly and frequently are smart enough to operate below the radar joking, gossiping, and grumbling about bosses and clients (Scott 1990). Conflict between workers and management or between hosts and guests is not necessarily apparent on the surface, such tensions may play out at a metaphorical level in symbolic actions or as social dramas (Turner 1974). Such oppositional tactics are a way for workers to enact an aesthetic of *coups* against the dominant order, embezzling little bits of social space or the boss's clock and reassigning meaning (de Certeau 1980). I do not discount the conclusions of Johnson and Underiner or those of similar studies however I feel that this overestimates the degree to which the guests are empowered at the expense of their hosts. Rather, Indian-tourist encounters are best understood as a two-way street, with creative accommodations made by both parties (Nicks 1999). In tourism studies, too often the broad range of responses among both tourists and native performers is truncated or ignored without thoroughly engaging issues such as exchange, motivation, nationalism, and identity.

Ethnographic studies have provided several examples of Native Americans needing a way to control frequent, uncomfortable encounters with non-Indian peoples, tourists among them, and finding that means in performance. Basso's (1979) work provides some excellent examples of how looking at the context and motivation of host performances reveals more thorough and empirically grounded explanations. When the Apache perform the code-switching in their joking imitations, they are playing with social categories, but also constructing models of the categories and staging representations of those models. Also in the Southwest, D. Evans-Pritchard (1989) foregrounds Indians' joking behavior not only among themselves laughing at tourists, but also laughing with the tourists at themselves. There is bitterness in this laughter, an awareness of irony as the Indian artists and hosts find

themselves in a situation needing to appear Indian and tell the tourists what they want to hear. Sweet (1989) develops the thesis that through ritualized comedic performance, the Pueblo are able to incorporate the foreign, including tourists, into their own cultural worlds. She writes, “that which is perplexing or threatening about others becomes comical and harmless... and made meaningful” (1989:63).

In Cherokee the relationships among tourism, history, authenticity, and the growing cultural revitalization movement complicate any simplistic understanding of the politics of display. Gone are questions like: should we think of Cherokee cultural performances as acts of preservation or touristic commodities? Are the Cherokee baskets for sale at the Qualla Arts and Crafts Co-op made for the art market or as continuations of tradition? As Phillips and Steiner (1999) argue the very premises of such questions are inherently flawed because they are based on an ethnocentric European tradition of evaluating the objects of cultural Others as either ethnographic specimens or works of art, without considering the distinction as a false dichotomy that overlaps substantially with commodities. Art historians and anthropologists have traditionally rejected commoditized forms because of their hybridity, a rejection founded upon essentialist notions of culture and idealized notions of pure art (Clifford 1988). Disdainful critiques from anthropologists and collectors alike of these objects—here, I would add performances, too—as spoiled and suspicious because of their hybridity, dovetail nicely with Victorian notions of the weakening of stock by interracial breeding. Ethnography is well suited to disentangle this interlocking network of cultural reproduction, aesthetic performance, and market economies by collaborating with native artists and creative people involved in the manufacture of tourist objects and performances, and considering their motivations as situated in a particular historical and political context.

For example, in contemporary Cherokee life there is an exciting atmosphere of collective “renaissance,” and the changes at *Unto These Hills* are a prominent part of this, and it is made possible by tourism which has encouraged the development of certain hybrid forms. Here I use the term hybrid to demonstrate a concern for “how things become part of a community” (Samuels 1999:466). I am particularly interested in how capitalism influences not only which things but also which performances are incorporated into the Cherokee tourist economy. For example, Odawa potter Frank Ettawageshik (1999) describes his participation in the manufacture of “tourist art” as a kind of tradition in itself, tracing his participation in the tourism business to memories of his father’s store, his grandfather’s store, and his trader ancestors that preceded them. For three generations tourists have come to Little Traverse Bay, Michigan, on steamers traveling the Great Lakes, and later the railroads, and highways, looking for inexpensive souvenirs.

The people who learned to make Indian art during that time are now prominent artists and have set the pace for the resurgence of these traditional art forms... The tourist market served by my father’s business and other businesses like his was instrumental in keeping people working in this art form while the art world was becoming more sophisticated in its appreciation of American Indian art. (Ettawageshik 1999:25)

The creation of early tourist-art products out of native craft traditions was a response to market pressures and pressures on native peoples to assimilate. Resistance to federal projects such as allotment and termination were only feasible when tribes could find some means to sustain the infrastructure of their societies, for all human communities are viable only when they have access to material resources. For some tribes, certainly this is the case in the Southeast, tourism was a means to survive by marketing distinctiveness (Paredes 1995). As American culture and politics changed during the Civil Rights movement, increased political and economic mobilization as well as ethnic consciousness among many tribes made

headway under the banner of Red Power. Waiting for the moment to arrive, American Indian artists were perfecting their craft by producing tourist art. Today these older artisans trained by tourism are the new leaders in the renewal of artistic practices.

I will argue that among the EBCI this is true not only for object art, but for performance as well and *Unto These Hills* is case in point. The drama has been a vehicle for tourism to politicize Cherokee difference. As Finger writes, “This kind of tourist extravaganza would give both whites and Indians a vested interest in maintaining a Cherokee tribal identity” (Finger 1991:124). However, in 1950 this negotiating of identity had to contend with the essential compromise of tourism: non-Indian desires and expectations often trumped the wishes of tribal members. Not only did the predominantly White audience wish to be catered to through certain narratives of history, local whites stood to benefit from their proximity to the Cherokee too as the drama created an economic interdependency between the tribe and the rest of western North Carolina. It is these very terms of accommodation with tourists and local non-Indians that are currently in the process of being redefined in Cherokee.

Following Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) my research will consider the agency of display as a social process, which includes decisions about what gets displayed and what remains hidden, who is allowed to perform and who remains backstage, and how the context of display couches the meaning of performative communications. In Cherokee today the social process of display is changing and the changes manifest in contemporary displays are predicated on the displays which have preceded them. For many Cherokees the accommodations that were made in the 1950s in anticipating non-Indian tourist desires, especially their expectations to see Indians represented as they were in the Wild West shows

and western movies, no longer hold the weight they once did. This might even be true of the tourists too, as some Cherokees who spoke with me claimed that they are now more sensitive and better educated than the tourists of 1950. The relevance of these accommodations has changed because the national historical processes which necessitated those accommodations have themselves changed. Due in part to the wealth generated by the tribally run Harrah's Cherokee Casino, tribal sovereignty now asserts itself with greater power and the tribe has greater clout with neighboring non-Indians. The accommodations for tourists in the mid-twentieth century were made in relation to an economic dependency on tourism. The revenue generated by this service industry was very important for the tribe's infrastructure though it was quite meager. Tourism is just as important today only now the tribe runs a very profitable casino and the return is quite lucrative. In a time of prosperity the power relations between host and guest have been upended to an extent. The showing of objects, people, and performances is always already an exhibit of the agency of those who make such exhibits, and clearly economic factors are important in structuring that agency and deciding who or what gets displayed.

The Continuing Importance of Cultural Tourism in the Gaming Era

Although the cultural attractions are fundamentally businesses many Cherokees assign a special significance to them that does not overlap with the casino. In particular the cultural attractions, *Unto These Hills* among them, are also key sites for the negotiation of Cherokee identity through the presentation of narratives of the past. Since the recent developments at the drama partly owe their origins to the financial backing of the casino I

will provide some background information on how the EBCI's status as a gaming tribe came to develop in the way that it has.

During the economic recession and stagflation of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the EBCI was hit hard by shrinking tourist revenues and this was compounded by President Reagan's misguided efforts to promote Indian economic self-sufficiency by cutting federal Indian programs. In response to the worsening economic picture throughout Indian Country, the Florida Seminoles opened a bingo parlor in 1979 and in the early 1980s the Cabazon Indians of California opened a card room. The EBCI first entered gaming experimentally by opening a bingo parlor in 1982. Bingo proved to be lucrative so the tribe kept the new addition to enhance their appeal to tourists (Finger 1991). In 1987 the Supreme Court decided *Cabazon v. California*, a decision that prohibits states that regulate gaming within their borders from regulating gambling on Indian land (Mason 2000). Then in 1988 Congress passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA), which was justified by arguments that it would ensure that tribes are the primary economic beneficiary of Indian gaming and protect tribes from organized crime. The IGRA also creates three classes of gaming: Class I including traditional or ritual gaming; Class II including bingo; Class III including casino gambling, dog racing, and jai alai (Mason 2000). In order for a tribe to offer commercial gaming a compact must be negotiated with the state government.

Throughout the 1980s the EBCI were on the losing end of an intense competition with Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, the western entrance to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which host major attractions like the "Dollywood" amusement park that siphon off most of the park's visitors. The tribe sought to gain ground in this competition for tourist dollars by opening negotiations for a gaming compact with Governor

Jim Martin in 1991, but they made more progress with his successor Governor Jim Hunt. While Finger states that during the bingo era, “most Cherokee had learned to accept the games as a economic necessity and fact of life” (Finger 1991:161), according to Oakley (2001) most Cherokee openly opposed casino gambling and the tribal council’s pursuit of negotiations with the governor led many to distrust the council. Whereas tribal council meetings previously had been public and broadcast on local television, council debates surrounding gaming went on behind closed doors with the broadcasts blacked out. In 1994, without referendum, the council voted to go ahead accepting bids from corporate casinos. In 1995 after months of bitter factionalism, one council meeting ending in a brawl and even FBI inquiries into corruption charges, the deal went to Harrah’s Inc. This was followed later that year by a great political upheaval in Cherokee, with voters electing the first female principal chief of the EBCI, Joyce Dugan, and turning out ten of twelve council members. In 1997 Harrah’s Cherokee casino opened to a crowd already lined up to enter and was well on its way to being extremely lucrative (Oakley 2001).

Even though the casino now dwarfs everything else in terms of revenue generated cultural tourism remains very important. The tourist industry has been instrumental in creating “heritage” through museums and shops, the Indian village, and the drama. Desmond (1999) in her work on tourism in Hawaii, provides historical examples strikingly similar to tourism in Cherokee, yet the futures of these destinations appear to be divergent. In Hawaii cultural tourism is also rooted in the live performance of difference, especially hula dancing, yet, she writes, “the move from implicit cultural celebration to explicit cultural nationalism is rarely made... It is ultimately the political power of such claims for justice which will force any fundamental change in the tourist industry” (1999:32). Cherokee, by contrast, is making

this leap from cultural display to revitalization and nationalism, and the current “renaissance” is case in point. Cultural preservation and revitalization coincided with tourism first around basketry as exemplified with the 1946 organization of the Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual (Duggan 1997). The Cherokee syllabary once intersected tourism as a kind of icon, enhancing the value of trivets and coffee mugs sold to tourists. Today language revitalization is a major concern for the tribe as it organizes language immersion classes for children and puts up syllabary street signs (Bender 2002). One of the most recent developments of Cherokee nationalism are the “Warriors of Ani Kituhwa,” a troupe sponsored by the Museum of the Cherokee Indian that performs a recreated war dance based on eighteenth century descriptions (King 2007). I first witnessed the Ani Kituhwa dancers at the Festival of Native Peoples on the grandstand of the Cherokee fairgrounds. This is the same stage used for rock concerts and beauty pageants, the same fairgrounds used for rodeos and carnivals. The physical presence of this stage was made possible by tourist dollars and it is used primarily for tourist events. While performances such as the Warriors of Ani Kituhwa are developed for the home audience, I later saw them precede the Cherokee High School football team on to the field, it is also done in a way that allows visitors to come and take a peek. Thus, following Bendix, “the tourists are fascinated by the costumes and the noise, the emblems chosen for the display, while the natives are interested in... who is hidden underneath the costumes” (1989:141).

This displaying of qualities exhibited by a certain group and having those signifying qualities recognized by a comprehending audience conforms to Barth’s contention that “people sustain their identity through public behavior” (1969:132). Performance theory in contemporary cultural anthropology, or the theory that identities are “done” as if an action

executed in particular times and places, is something of a crosspollination of Barth's theory of ethnicity with Goffman's (1959) notion of self as "mask," Turner's (1974) work on the symbolic nature of social process and what Austin (1962) identified as the "illocutionary force" of language (Ebron 2002). Schechner puts it most succinctly when he writes, "There are limits to what 'is' performance. But just about anything can be studied 'as' performance" (2002:30). *Unto These Hills* and other public displays by Cherokees for tourist audiences "is" performance. The relationships among history, identity, and tourism insofar as they are expressed by hosts and guests in actions and behaviors can also be understood "as" performance. This category of "as" performance is a very useful theoretical device for considering subjects "provisionally, in process, and as they change over time" (Schechner 2002:41).

My ethnographic research in Cherokee follows Jackson who argues identities are "predicated on perceptions of particular social actions and is shored up with recourse to specific kinds of activities" (2001:4). Therefore in order to collect examples of people "doing" identity, I will be focusing on the act of Cherokee people speaking, rather than, say, the Cherokee language itself. This will be a new angle in Cherokee studies, where symbolic resistance to white domination has been ascribed to the persistence of their native language (Gulick 1958) rather than the particular way Cherokee use English. Arguably this was part of Basso's (1979) project in his research on joking performances among Apache. He shows how power plays at stake in Natives' English speech acts fill a social function, they help to shore up identity formation in the face of racial inequality.

Documenting the history of *Unto These Hills* and the production of its sequels contributes to the body of knowledge about contemporary Cherokee life while engaging in

interdisciplinary conversations about the relationships among tourism, history, performance, and identities. I see tourism, a sort of tradition in its own right, as having shaped the public display of social boundaries by turning them into commercial performances. In addition to erecting performance infrastructure including stages and other “contact zones” (Pratt 1992), tourism has encouraged certain conventional devices for cultural performance. These conventional forms comprise a Cherokee “cultural poetics” (Limón 1994), or interpretations of the world read in cultural expressions, which expresses the politics and power at stake in struggles to redefine the local tourist economy and Cherokee nationalist ideology. These poetics can be found not only in the performance of *Unto These Hills*, but also in the debates and processes surrounding the re-creation of the drama insofar as the use of oral narratives and everyday speech works to organize community opinions (Foley 1995). Considering the importance of tourism in shaping the form of these expressions, it is not surprising that in this era of “renaissance” the EBCI is taking control of its tourist performances in order to reassert its difference. Yet, this contemporary political scene of “renaissance” is made possible by the old politics of mid-century cultural tourism, which, following Ettawageshik, served the tribe by providing an economic basis for maintaining a cohesive Cherokee society until the opportunity for greater control over representations presented itself.

Today the CHA still manages the outdoor drama and Indian village, only in 2004 did non-Indians yield control of the association, which is now run primarily by tribal members. The sun has set on *Unto These Hills*’ glory days and its role as the major tourist draw has been usurped by the casino. To the burgeoning cultural revitalization movement in Cherokee the accommodations served by *Unto These Hills* are of less consequence today. Time has run out for the old drama. In speaking with CHA chairman Lewis Harding about the changes to

the drama, he told me, “The Chief called me into his office and said, ‘Fix it or nix it.’” From the tribal government’s point of view it would be better to do away with the drama completely than keep perpetuating its inaccurate and problematic representation of Cherokee history. In effort to “fix it,” in 2006 the CHA trusted the task of producing the first completely new show in over half a century with Kiowa-Delaware playwright Hanay Geiogamah.

Held in high esteem throughout the performing arts community as a leader in American Indian theater and choreography, Geiogamah is best known for his collection of plays premiered in the 1970s: *Body Indian*, *Foghorn*, and *49* (Geiogamah 1980). Having developed a passion for politics during the Red Power movement of the 1970s, Geiogamah turned to theater to express himself while a journalism student at the University of Oklahoma (Pinazzi 2000). Discussing the style of his collected works from the 1970s, Pinazzi argues they “prove the affinity of Geiogamah’s theater to the Euro-American... avant garde of the 1960s” (2000:187). Still, this avant-garde style is always political, of his piece *Foghorn* debuted in Germany, Geiogamah states in interview, “We wanted it to be a statement of militancy,” continuing, “We met a number of people in the German theater. They were too mesmerized to really talk about anything real we were doing. Everybody said ‘This is Brecht’” (Lincoln 2000:293). However, Geiogamah attributes this interpretation to Euro-American ethnocentrism, “They have their own idea of what Indian theater should be and cannot cope with anything different” (Pinazzi 2000:180). Although he acknowledges having read Brecht and having received help in understanding the Brechtian applications of his plays while at La MaMa Experimental Theater Club in the East Village of New York City,

Geiogamah says, “what was really interesting about Brecht was the attitude... everything that constitutes that alienation thing seemed corny to me” (Lincoln 2000:293).

Geiogamah’s artistic and cultural politics make him a provocative choice to revamp the work of Kermit Hunter. Of his early works Geiogamah writes, “Acceptance by non-Indian audiences was not a primary consideration, although it was not discouraged” (Geiogamah 2000:161), and “In judging an Indian play, readers and viewers should keep in mind that the most important function of the Indian dramatist is to communicate with his own people” (2000:163). This contrasts sharply with Hayes’ characterization of Hunter’s drama, which was “[written] in 1950 for the specific purpose of telling the story of the Eastern Band of Cherokees to the great numbers of tourists who annually pass through their town” (1982:109). This transformation from a mid-twentieth century ideal of entertainment for the non-Indian masses to a cultural aesthetic communication among Indians written by an icon of experimental theater and activist from the 1970s is truly astounding. For all appearances this new politics of display is a 180-degree turnaround from the politics of the old drama and yet it is a change made possible by the success of that older politics of display.

Even though the Cherokee tourist economy has changed dramatically since the introduction of Harrah’s casino in 1997, cultural tourism remains important locally. While it is not as economically important as gaming, cultural tourism has a special resonance among Cherokees. Many tribal members who spoke with me characterized the drama as a “preservation of tradition,” but it is also an important means for the tribe to reproduce its identity through public display. The long history of this drama as a local institution, combined with its important symbolic and economic role in the community practically

guaranteed that the planned changes to the show would be met with some ambivalence and public debate, but also that it would be greatly anticipated for the same reasons.

Overview of the dissertation

Tourism challenges and enriches social science because it is such an ideal case study of changing labor issues in the rise of the service sector economy in the United States. In the case of so-called ethnic tourism where the cultural identity of the hosts is a primary draw for the guests, tourism presents intriguing, often confusing scenarios where performances are negotiated in part by audience expectations and desires as well as native willingness to make public some aspects of their culture while keeping others private. The end product, what is displayed on stage, is not only the result of rehearsal and artistic virtuosity, but also political processes. I share with Bruner (2005) the opinion that these performances are not approximations or corruptions of tradition but “new” culture. In Cherokee, North Carolina, touristic performance as a means of cultural expression vests this practice with additional significance that underscores its local importance even while other forms of revenue generation such as casino gambling have since eclipsed older attractions such as the drama, village, and museum. In fact Harrah’s Cherokee Casino has played a crucial role in pushing cultural tourism to the fore of the Eastern Band’s ongoing ethnic renewal. First, the casino has provided the financial resources necessary for the tribal government to take control of the way its people’s history and culture are represented. Second, the casino presents an ethical foil to the cultural attractions. While many tribal members are now accepting of the casino and grateful for the resources it provides, it is not embraced as are the cultural attractions

which are believed to draw a more desirable type of tourist and to communicate a vital message about the past, present, and future of the Cherokee people.

In the chapter that follows, “The History of Displaying History in Cherokee, North Carolina,” I provide an in-depth history of the CHA based on original document research. This story begins by examining the tradition of boosterism among the social elites of southern Appalachia, culminating in the formation of the Western North Carolina Associated Communities. Among the WNCAC’s many projects was a proposed outdoor drama in Cherokee that was intended to act as a draw for tourists and serve as a unique brand for the entire region. From the WNCAC’s perspective this project would require the assistance of two important institutions: the tribal government of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. With political backing from tribal leaders and expertise in theater from UNC’s faculty and graduate students the opportunity to create a drama became real. The WNCAC created the Cherokee Historical Association to work with the tribe, serve as liaison to the university, and manage the debut of a major theatrical production. Despite the difficulty in securing the necessary financing to produce the drama and the relative remoteness of the Cherokee reservation, *Unto These Hills* debuted a smashing success in 1950. Following on the heels of the drama’s success was the ascendancy of the CHA as a politically influential local institution. The association counted among its membership local and state politicians, prominent businessmen and community leaders. A tension developed between the CHA and the tribal government regarding its control over this important economic resource. The EBCI government first sought a share of the drama’s revenue and later settled for taxing its ticket sales. There was also some tension between the CHA and individual tribal members over access to jobs. The perception

developed that preference was shown towards non-Indians in casting, that non-Indians received better pay for playing similar parts, and that there were limits on managerial advancement for Cherokees. Over the decades the CHA acted with great political acumen to develop allies among tribal leaders and among tribal members by underwriting prizes at the annual fair, offering educational loans and grants, and spearheading projects they believed would be of benefit to the reservation. Cherokees today are often ambivalent towards the CHA because their memory of the organization incorporates both the substantial goodwill it generated among the Cherokee community and the precarious relationship it held with the tribe chronically fraught with conflicts.

In chapter three, “‘Tragedy and Triumph’: The rise and fall, and rebirth, of the Cherokee Historical Association,” I borrow a melodramatic turn of phrase from the advertisements of *Unto These Hills* to characterize the CHA in the late twentieth century. As the decline in the drama’s ticket sales accelerated in the 1990s and early 2000s, the CHA tried but failed to continue as an economically sustainable operation. Some unwise business decisions on the part of the CHA exacerbated this unfavorable economic outlook, ultimately culminating in bankruptcy in 2004. While times were bad for the CHA, remarkable changes were taking place throughout Cherokee society. The incredible success of the fantastically lucrative Harrah’s Cherokee Casino, opened since 1997, had helped tribal members make great strides towards lifting themselves out of poverty while simultaneously granting considerable regional clout to the tribal government. Recognizing the value of this local icon the EBCI moved to save the CHA in a bailout, replaced its management with tribal members, and set about making changes to the drama. The new Cherokee led management of the CHA found their business operation without a long-term vision for the future and in desperate need

of a major cash infusion to repair the theater, backstage, and other properties now badly decayed. Organizationally the new management needed to chart a new way of doing business from selling tickets online to reducing overtime and waste. Physically they were forced to conduct triage on the theater's infrastructure while upgrading the office workspace. Many in the CHA underestimated the scale of the project of revamping the drama. Some of the most basic and fundamental changes necessary for turning the business around could be addressed right away, while others were not immediately apparent to the new management and had to be "discovered" in the course of doing business. In part this was due to the fact that the Cherokee takeover of the CHA and the subsequent replacement of non-Indian employees with tribal members was a traumatic process. As a result of this unhappy divorce, both in the office and in the theater, the new CHA had to teach itself how to produce and manage the drama with limited input from more experienced non-Indian employees. This imparted a unique ethical dimension to the production of *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* in 2006 as the new CHA leadership perceived their actions as sensible and necessary in contrast to the ingrained and baroque techniques of the old regime.

Turning to the classic drama itself in chapter four, "'The spirit of history': Rereading *Unto These Hills*," I discuss in detail the drama's representation of Cherokee history and culture that was presented for tourists, 1950-2005. Here the chapter title references a letter by Sam Seldon, mentor of Kermit Hunter, the drama's playwright, in which he defends the necessity to take artistic liberties with Cherokee history in order to make it more compelling and affective, and hence a greater tourist draw and more commercially successful attraction. I begin with a discussion of the manner in which outdoor drama diverges from more typical indoor stage shows. Outdoor drama is rooted in a tradition of pageantry and has roots in

American populism. Mountainside Theater, like most outdoor theaters, attracts middle class and working class families with children, including individuals without any prior knowledge of theater and who may never see another theatrical performance. Reaching this target audience was at the fore of Hunter's playwriting efforts. Additionally both the audience and the playwright were inclined to approach Indians primarily as nationalist symbols, their opinions shaped by stereotypes rendered in the popular Hollywood westerns of the middle twentieth century. In a scene by scene analysis I identify the many inaccuracies in *Unto These Hills* and diagnose the social and culture "work" done by these misrepresentations. Primarily I argue that it casts the Cherokees at the time of Removal as Americans thus subsuming their history into a greater American history. The power of this rhetorical appropriation of the past articulated through the melodramatic plot of *Unto These Hills* was to create a sense of nationalist unity in the audience with each other and, some may have imagined, with the Cherokee. Hunter, in responding to his critics, claimed it was necessary for art to be appreciated as distinct from history. For him distortions of the facts could be excused in the name of art so that the audience might be entertained. Simultaneously agents within CHA were at work successfully marketing the drama as an educational experience and touted the great work it was doing in the Cherokee community in "preserving tradition." In this way the drama got to have its cake and eat it too by claiming to be mere entertainment not to be held to the same standards as history, yet packaging itself as informative to the point that some customers described the classic drama as a "reenactment."

The voice of the dissertation changes in chapters five and six as I break from the scholarly interpretation of the script and the ethnohistory of the CHA in order to convey as a storyteller something of my experience of being in Cherokee, North Carolina. "The Business

of Producing Cultural Performance: A season of office work at the Cherokee Historical Association,” is a month-by-month account of my going to work at the CHA. Here I get to know the Cherokees and non-Indians who staffed the new CHA. I share with the reader our successes and failures, our frustrations, and our laughter as we struggled to stage a major theatrical production. My goal in arranging these stories chronologically is to convey the accelerating pace of action as the seasons change and the stress of the new drama’s debut approaches. In telling these office stories I am able to offer insights and observations into everyday life in Cherokee that lie outside the bounds of my focus on the drama. The result is, I feel, a rich ethnographic portrayal of the business of tourism in Cherokee. In the next chapter, “Backstage at the Mountainside: The labor of performing cultural difference,” I continue in this voice telling the story of my experience of being a stage performer in the new drama. This chapter is also arranged in a generally chronological manner though it is more topical and not as linear as the preceding chapter. In the months leading up to the debut of the new drama the CHA leadership was under considerable stress and this expressed itself in part through conflict with the non-Cherokee Indians who composed the production staff. In particular the production schedule was running late and the auditions and rehearsals did not start as early as was desired creating a domino effect that colored the entire season. I describe the auditions and rehearsals in detail and include the chance encounter that resulted in my getting cast in the drama too. Once the drama was under way the cast and crew, including Cherokees, non-Cherokee Indians, and non-Indians, did not always coexist happily and there was some conflict in the backstage. Sometimes these were just personality conflicts, at other times there was conflict over what the new drama should be and how Cherokee culture should be represented in it. While some saw the drama as an opportunity

for artistic development and nationalist cultural display, others saw the drama as just another summer job and participated in it primarily as a means to end. However everyone engaged in the backstage as vibrant social scene and one that was full of life and laughter. I theorize that the source of the backstage conflict can be found in the meaningful tradition of the drama for the Cherokee community as something relatively static and the high stakes the tribe risked in order to reinvent the drama as something new.

The concluding chapter, “‘We’re not just a casino tribe’: On living with cultural tourism,” explores one aspect of the legacy of *Unto These Hills* in the way its narratives have been used to structure both Cherokee and tourist identities. I show that Cherokees demonstrate a wide range of opinions about the classic drama, many found it entertaining and downplayed the significance of its many inaccuracies. While most people I talked to recognized the need for change at the drama there were few agreements about what were the most important problems to be addressed. Additionally, I found that prior to the new drama’s debut, few people were aware of the scope of the changes planned, with some expressing deep anxiety about what would happen if all did not turn out well. Perhaps as a result of this ambivalence Cherokee reaction to *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* was mixed. Relying on opinions published by the local newspaper, the Cherokee One Feather, I present the broad range of Cherokee response to the new play. Tourist response was also mixed. In analyzing the critiques the audience members made in letters of complaint, emails, and phone calls certain patterns emerge. First is that the experience of seeing the drama in the past had a profound impact on some people. In comparing the new show with the one in their memory, tourists revealed how selectively they remembered the old show including remembering things that did not happen in the classic drama as well as critiquing the new drama for

aspects of the performance that were also present in the old one. Shifting to more theoretical discussions I consider three interrelated critiques of the new show by tourists. First is ambivalence concerning the notion that the Cherokee should turn a commercial profit over the theatrical display of their culture and history. Second is the belief that the drama should instead answer to a higher calling of educating the American masses as to the tragedy of Indian removal. Third is anger when the desire to see that tragedy acted out on stage is deferred and replaced instead with an uplifting message of perseverance. I argue that part of the reason why *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* was unable to satisfy some audience members is because it is a fundamentally different way of relating to the past. It offers an alternate history unbound from the personal memories of its audience and in opposition to the nostalgia that coats the genre of outdoor drama. Interestingly some of these theories are quite similar to the responses provided by the new CHA management to the tourist and other local reactions. Nevertheless the CHA was charged with not only producing a sensitive representation of Cherokee culture and history, but one that successfully appeals to the widest audience possible. That is why in 2007 and 2008 a second and third version of the new show was tried. It would seem that even in an era of “renaissance” accommodations made for the non-Indian audience cannot simply be disregarded, however they may be open to renegotiation.

* * *

When the journalist Charles Lanman visited the North Carolina Cherokee in the late 1840s, William Thomas saw an opportunity for generating public support for the Cherokee by means of a sympathetic portrayal in Lanman’s publications (Finger 1984). To make sure Lanman got the full treatment he arranged for some Cherokee ballplayers to put on a game

for their guest's education and amusement. This time, however, it was a performance with a difference because Thomas paid the ballplayers (Hill 1997:164). The history of Indian and non-Indian relations has long included the strategic presentation of Cherokee selves for political and economic ends.

As the tourists stormed the Cherokee in the middle twentieth century, so did the anthropologists, many of whom were concerned that the "authenticity" of Cherokee culture was in decay as a result of tourism. My dissertation departs from this dated outlook through a study of the production and authentication of identity performances in the re-creation of *Unto These Hills*. I consider Cherokee identities as embedded in a post-industrial service economy that thrives upon the commoditization of cultural traditions. Significantly, these are the same traditions which anthropology formerly held to be the primary anchor of identity claims. A real need does exist within anthropology to rethink "authenticity," especially with regard to American Indians.

The EBCI have seen much formal capitalist change and commoditization. In 1914 the federal government sought to "develop" the Cherokee economy by encouraging them to sell their crafts to tourists and since 1950 the main draw of a vacation to Cherokee, North Carolina, was gazing upon a simultaneous performance of Cherokee heritage alongside performances of Indian stereotypes. However things have changed with the opening of Harrah's Cherokee Casino in 1997, a business much more lucrative than the cultural attractions and stereotypes. Yet the casino has posed new challenges too as attendance is down at all the cultural attractions, which very few gamblers bother to patronize. This is a disconcerting effect to some and the tribe is attempting to remedy it through a campaign to revitalize downtown. "We're not just a casino tribe," I was told, "that's why we're putting so

much into promoting the cultural attractions.” Barth (1969) argued that ethnicity is public behavior, a set of practices performed for comprehending others. The public in Cherokee is not only local but also extra-local tourists, suggesting that Cherokee identities are mediated through tourism in some ways. Changing the image of the group’s public presentation of self has implications for private constructions of Cherokee identity. Some Cherokees seem to say: this casino is not who I am. Instead, some point to the cultural attractions as the more desirable public face, tourist attractions that are themselves local institutions. Too often studies of tourism preconceive it as an inherently corrosive force which acts against “authentic tradition.” But tourism is itself a kind of tradition in Cherokee, as evidenced by a historical “Tourism” display in the Museum of the Cherokee Indian. Once you are done with your tour, you can go to the museum gift shop and get a postcard of a roadside chief to go with your rivercane basket.

The History of Displaying History in Cherokee, North Carolina

At the dedication of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, President Franklin D. Roosevelt (1940) cast his rhetoric towards an imagined American past embodied in the trees “that stood before our forefathers ever came to this continent.” The new national park would conserve these “untamed mountains” and give “future generations a sense of the land from which their forefathers hewed their homes.”

That hewing was hard. The dangers were many. The rifle could never be far from the axe. The pioneers stood on their own feet, they shot their own game and they fought off their own enemies. In time of accident or misfortune they helped each other, and in time of Indian attack they stood by each other. Today we no longer face Indians and hard and lonely struggles with nature – but today we have grown soft in many ways.

With this invocation of the past and its special relationship to land President Roosevelt warned his audience not to shrink from the dangers of the modern world and to stand together as a nation. Inspiration for this call to nationalism came from a myth of pioneers who bent the wilds of North America to their will. Because the world of 1940 was vastly different than that of the pioneers, “shrunk by the airplane and the radio,” now, “Europe is closer to America today than was one side of these mountains to the other side when the pioneers toiled through the primeval forest.”

The arrow, the tomahawk, and the scalping knife have been replaced by the airplane, the bomb, the tank, and the machine gun. Their threat is as close to us today as was the threat to the frontiersmen when hostile Indians were lurking on the other side of the gap.

As President Roosevelt spoke these words there were, in fact, Indians on the other side of the gap. At the eastern entrance to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park lay the tiny village of Cherokee, North Carolina, home to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

The Cherokee reservation, known as the Qualla Boundary, would be completely transformed by the new park. The declining importance of agriculture combined with the normalization of wage labor in a cash economy had allowed the Cherokee to seek new sources of income by catering to tourists. Tourism had been a small and seasonal industry in Cherokee, North Carolina, beginning with the first annual Cherokee Indian Festival in 1914. The opening of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1940, followed shortly thereafter by the Blue Ridge Parkway, would raise the national profile of Cherokee and all of western North Carolina. With the creation of these two major attractions area businessmen and Chambers of Commerce began meeting together to plan for the future development of western North Carolina's tourism industry. The Cherokee reservation with its prime location featured prominently in their plans.

“An organization of organizations”: The WNCAC

The organization of prominent businessmen and political leaders in western North Carolina was not a new phenomenon – as early as the 1890s citizen groups formed to petition the federal government for the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This quest to create a national park played a significant role in motivating the political organization of western North Carolina, contributing to the formation of regional identity both through the process of that political effort and its product, the park itself, as an embodied commemoration of that process. Writing in the middle 1950s in their history of

western North Carolina boosterism Simpson, Herring and Morrill reflect, “Since its dedication in 1940, the Park has been a continuing common interest, and something of an integrator for the whole southwestern mountain region” (1956:14). The integration of which Simpson et al speak was of the mountain elites who could now articulate their shared interests by means of the park.

Also notable in their efforts to develop regional economic and tourism interests were early attempts to organize around Asheville and Buncombe County, which typically fell flat outside of the city. One reason for the failure of Asheville-centrism is geography. The twenty-three counties on all sides of Asheville composed an area too large for participants to travel across and organize as a region given the limitations on transportation and communication at middle of the twentieth century. Moreover the rural counties were not predisposed to make effort to aid the city. As Simpson et al write, “Asheville, as the dominant center, was not universally popular in its hinterland... Asheville was mistrusted, on the grounds that it would run things according to its own interest” (1956:11). During my ethnographic field research in 2005 and 2006 I found that similar prejudice against Asheville persists in the counties west of Buncombe among men and women, across generations, and with both Indians and non-Indians.

Yet failure can lead to focus and out of these earlier attempts would emerge the Western North Carolina Associated Communities (WNCAC), the parent organization of the Cherokee Historical Association (CHA) among others. From the beginning the WNCAC’s agenda focused on tourism by developing the North Carolina side of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, establishing a museum at the park’s eastern entrance, developing more hotels, motels, gas stations, and restaurants for tourists, attempting to complete the

Bryson City-Fontana Road, initiating a historical outdoor drama to serve as a tourist attraction, completing the Blue Ridge Parkway south of Asheville, and generally encouraging the development of each county's own Chamber of Commerce. This was a broad vision for the future of the western third of the state and shows that their designs on Cherokee were only a part of a larger plan.

The WNCAC was a group composed of privileged and powerful men. "[These] men of the leadership group in greater or lesser degree, had achieved sufficient means to enable them to take on outside activities and to pay the costs out of their own pockets" (1956:56). Not only were they "people of wealth and means," but, "often they had moved into the area rather than being native to it" (1956:13).

This was a group of considerable variety, of course, as to personal characteristics, background, occupation and as to means. It was a middle-aged group... It was, in fact, a group of some considerable, and not altogether happy, experience in efforts at regional cooperation. Most of these men had been active in mountain affairs as early as the nineteen twenties. (1956:55)

What set the WNCAC apart and made them so effective was their political prowess, an understanding of how to make things happen, for "political influence has been a major leverage in securing action on many of the projects" (1956:56). As a loose association of likeminded and powerful friends the structure of the WNCAC, "placed a maximum of reliance upon personal and informal relationships" (1956:52).

The creation of the Cherokee Historical Association and *Unto These Hills* is not the only testament to the WNCAC's political power. They were also instrumental in getting the federal government to complete the Blue Ridge Parkway south of Asheville to its current terminus at the border between the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Qualla Boundary (Whisnant 2006). One prominent merchant from Waynesville, Charles Ray, a

founding member of the WNCAC had a solid reputation as a Parkway activist for having traveled to Raleigh and Washington, DC, to advocate for its cause but with only limited success. Ray and the WNCAC felt this was due in part to the fact that they were a private organization. To achieve their goals in 1947 Ray carried a petition the North Carolina State Assembly to create a new public committee, the North Carolina National Park, Parkway, and Forrest Development Commission. The state agreed and appointed Ray to chair the commission with his friends from the WNCAC rounding out the committee. It was from the authority granted them by the state that this new commission was able to secure the completion of the Blue Ridge Parkway and develop the eastern entrance to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, including funds for the restoration of the pioneer farm at the Oconaluftee ranger station.

Most interesting is WNCAC's efforts at developing oversight and surveillance regimes to discipline the service workers in the region's tourist industry. In the late 1940s and into the 1950s a tourist traveling through North Carolina west of Asheville could stop at a hotel or motor court, but just as likely the night could be spent in a private home that lent rooms to travelers. The WNCAC was deeply concerned by this informality and what it perceived as the lack of uniformity in the ways in which tourists were being treated by their hosts. Simpson et al write, "While there were many exceptions, the great majority of the people engaged in tourist activity were not 'professional' in their approach, when compared to tourist facility operators in Florida" (1956:35). However, the tourist industry workers did not appreciate all aspects of the WNCAC's grand vision for the future of the region, especially when it came to enforced professionalism as it was defined by mountain elites. Simpson et al's tone in describing this conflict is revealing.

The value, for instance, of advertising on a state, regional or national basis was not much appreciated. To lack of knowledge must be added the fact that, in the mountain way, these people as a group were highly individualistic, and therefore not especially disposed to organize themselves (1956:35).

The resistance of mountain hosts and workers in the tourist industry towards the WNCAC's good intentions was conceptualized in terms of their culture and uniqueness. Much as the WNCAC created the CHA to deal with the tribe and the Parks, Parkway, and Forests Commission to deal with the federal government, they imagined another organization, "that could raise money for advertising; that could set standards of courtesy, rates, and cleanliness, and maintain them; and that could take the lead in developing tourist facilities throughout the eleven county region" (1956:36). The Western North Carolina Tourist Association, forerunner to today's Smoky Mountain Host, was created to handle the disciplining of service workers in the tourist industry.

This job had to do with matters of courtesy, neatness and services to tourists in the way of giving directions, recommending good places to eat and sleep at the end of another day's travel, and of finding accommodations for tourists when one's own establishment was full.

In North Carolina, the State Department of Health regularly grades eating establishments with respect to their sanitary conditions, the top mark being 'Grade A.' The importance of this grade was stressed.

[Inducing] tourist facility operators to list their rates on both a regular and seasonal basis; and, of great importance, to abide by these rates, even when the demand for accommodations made possible the raising of rates temporarily (1956:38-39).

Despite local recalcitrance the WNCAC encountered when it tried to impose its standards of courtesy upon the little motor courts and guest room keepers, the organization was quite attracted to the myth of "highly individualistic" mountain folk. Prior to describing the WNCAC leadership as people who "had moved into the area rather than being native to it"

(1956:13), Simpson et al wrap the origins of the WNCAC snugly in the myth of Appalachian mountain difference:

The mountain region for a long time had felt itself neglected by the rest of the State and by-passed by much of twentieth century development. There were old, cankerous sores, and it was no new thought that mountain leadership should be brought together, and held together, for mountain purposes (1956:8-9).

The tone here seems to suggest that southern Appalachia was jealous for the modernity of North Carolina's Piedmont rather than guardedly keeping the rest of the world away for as long as possible. While it is true that not all of the WNCAC's leaders were originally from somewhere else, this statement makes it clear how ready these outsiders were to identify with Appalachia's otherness in order to justify their political agenda for economic development of the tourism industry. Cast now as flinty backwoodsmen their pursuit of the tourist dollar seems almost revanchist, a game of one-upmanship with the urban snobs of Raleigh.

The WNCAC meets the Eastern Band and the University of North Carolina

The WNCAC was, from the start, concerned with more than Cherokee and what would become *Unto These Hills*. The drama was always part of a broader agenda of regional development of tourist infrastructure and likewise the proposed benefits of a drama in Cherokee was couched in terms of the benefit it would provide to everyone in the western North Carolina tourist industry. Whatever Cherokee's place on the WNCAC's original agenda it appears that "construction of adequate tourist facilities at Cherokee" (1956:7) quickly moved up in importance among its early projects.

For Simpson et al the creation of the drama can be seen as part of a historical moment of nationalist fervor at the close of World War II, characterizing it as “inevitable in the post-war situation” and an outgrowth of “Regional pride and self-consciousness” (1956:24). In his history of twentieth century North Carolina tourism development, Richard Starnes notes that although *The Lost Colony* and state historic sites drew visitors before World War II, “localities did not view local history and culture as marketable commodities until after 1945” (2003:145).

In addition to serving an important need for nationalist storytelling it was hoped the drama would brand the entire region and make the mountains more appealing to vacationers. In their words, “It advertises and attracts” (1956:24). Of course it is not accidental that elite mountain Whites would chose Indians to be their symbol, especially when embedded in a nationalist narrative of the past. As Philip Deloria argues in *Playing Indian* (1998) non-Indian’s symbolic use of and identification with Indians is often a means for legitimating White claims to North American land. This convenient identification – the other is one of us – echoes the WNCAC’s self-identification as humble mountain folk in the retelling of their organization’s origin myth.

Interestingly, Simpson et al describe the WNCAC’s first interaction with the Eastern Band in a passive voice, “it was early realized that it was both proper and necessary to move with the agreement of the Cherokee Indians” (1956:25). The sentence is almost poetic in its vagueness. Who realized it was proper? What was so necessary about it? At the suggestion of Percy Ferebee, a founding member of both the WNCAC and the CHA, they first contacted the Cherokee’s BIA Superintendent Joe Jennings. It was through Jennings that a committee was organized including Chief Jarrett Blythe and Ross Caldwell, a white trader who, as we

shall see, had numerous personal reasons for being invested in producing an outdoor drama in Cherokee.

Long before any effort was made to begin writing and producing the play, let alone negotiating with the tribe, the WNCAC had only an idea. From the start that idea was, specifically, to emulate *The Lost Colony*. Moreover the WNCAC leadership group knew from the start that it would need professional help to stage a quality show. They went first to Paul Green, the Pulitzer Prize winning playwright of *The Lost Colony*, who was an acquaintance of George Stephens, a founding member of the WNCAC. At the time Green was in the faculty of the English department of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which as an institution had committed itself to the cause of transforming Southern myths and history into regional drama. Green, however, was not interested in working with the Cherokee material and instead introduced Stephens to his colleague at the Carolina Playmakers, Sam Selden. It was Selden who took the leadership role at UNC in germinating a Cherokee drama. With the promise of \$500 he was able to convince a graduate student in the English department, Kermit Hunter, to write a script. Selden also recruited Harry Davis, director for the Carolina Playmakers and a veteran of *The Lost Colony*, to direct the new production.

As enthusiastic as Selden, Hunter, and Davis were for the Cherokee drama there is no reason to suppose that they or any of the WNCAC leadership were at all familiar with Cherokee history and culture. There must have been an initial period of uncertainty as to what the show would be about and how its narrative would flow. Simpson et al write, “During this period Miss Mary Ulmer of the Indian School at Cherokee presented a paper on the history of the Cherokees that helped to sustain confidence in the basic story material of

the drama” (1956:26). During my fieldwork in 2005-2006 I found that many Cherokee still remembered the Book Lady, Mary Ulmer, wife of renowned Cherokee artist Goingback Chiltoskey. In a published collection of her aunt’s stories Ulmer’s niece writes:

In the winter of 1947, Mary Chiltoskey; Sam Gilliam, principal of the reservation and the Cherokee school; and Irma Mittelberg, music teacher at Cherokee, met to list possible episodes from Cherokee history which might be successfully used in an outdoor drama. Mary remembers listing several ideas from stories and information she had collected since arriving in Cherokee in 1942. (Galloway 1991:16)

Thus there was some early effort on the part of WNCAC and UNC at establishing a relationship with Cherokee, albeit through the Indian Agency office and teachers in the reservation school system, to learn what Cherokee stories would make for good theater.

Theirs was not the first effort at presenting Cherokee history and culture through theatrical performance. There was an earlier 1935 pageant, *The Spirit of the Great Smokies*, held during the fall Indian Fair for “Commemorating the one-hundredth anniversary of the Great Removal” (N.A. 1935). Written and directed by Margaret Pearson Speelman of the Haskell Institute, the pageant program claims that the crowd scene numbered “500 Cherokee Men and Women,” huge compared to what *Unto These Hills* would attempt. The great Cherokee scholar and traditionalist Will West Long (Witthoft 1948) played multiple roles in the pageant as The Chief and as leader of the Cherokee dancers. Some elements of *The Spirit of the Great Smokies* are quite similar to *Unto These Hills*, such as beginning the Cherokee story with the arrival of Hernando de Soto. The older pageant was different in other respects as it showed conflict between the French and English colonists who traded with the Cherokee as well as portraying the peace mission of Lieutenant Henry Timberlake. A greater diversity of Christian figures is displayed in *The Spirit of the Great Smokies*, which included a

Franciscan, a Jesuit, Moravians, and individual personalities such as Christian Priber. But perhaps the most significant similarities between the old pageant and the drama is the presence of Tsali [Charley]. In Episode III, “The Period of the Great Migration,” a narrator speaks:

Yet as night falls, from out the weary camps, a few steal out
And make their frightened way back to their loved homeland,
Their homeland in the mountains, where for bitter years
They hide in mountain caves, near the river Oconaluftee

They were the folk, the followers of old Charley
Who, when the night was black, called them to steal away

See our brave friend, the dauntless William Thomas,
Seek out by secret trails the stronghold of Utsala [Euchella],
To ask for help in seizing the brave Charley.

Well could our young men, the brave hearts of our people,
Learn still greater courage from the story of old Charley,
Who comes, to save his people, down from the mountains,
Giving himself to death, that Cherokee might live
As yet a landless alien in his own loved Hills.

The presence of the familiar historical characters of Tsali and William Thomas, and others such as Junaluska, Yonaguska, and Andrew Jackson show that there was already some consensus among Whites about what aspects of Cherokee history should be presented. That the pageant was staged during the Fall Indian Fair is significant because that is a festival of great local pride that draws enthusiastic participation from tribal members. There must have been widespread community participation in the pageant as the program notes, “costumes were developed by the Cherokee themselves in the Home Economics Department of the Cherokee School, or in the homes of the Cherokee people.” In addition to the assistance supplied by non-Indians through the local Agency, eleven Indians of other tribes came from the Chilocco Indian School to participate.

Perhaps local author Margaret Stringfield was moved by *The Spirit of the Great Smokies* pageant because in 1946 she published an operetta set during the Removal. In a pamphlet titled *The Cherokee in Romance, Tragedy and Song* (1946), Stringfield collects a hodge-podge of essays including a geographical essay on the Smokies, a historical piece based on Mooney's report as well as a piece by her father, William W. Stringfield, who served in the Thomas Brigade. Sandwiched between these non-fiction pieces is *Occoneechee, Fair Maid of the Forest, an Operetta in Three Acts*. In this fictitious love story set during 1838, Occoneechee is the daughter of Junaluska who somehow escapes removal, while her star-crossed lover, Whippoorwill is forced west. She grieves for him and after many years he returns to the Smokies to be reunited with his love.

There are a number of interesting similarities among *Occoneechee*, *The Spirit of the Great Smokies*, and *Unto These Hills* that illustrate a way of knowing the past shared among non-Indians. In all three stories Tecumseh and the Shawano visit Junaluska and the Cherokee, only to have their overtures of war against the Whites trumped by Cherokee loyalties to the Americans. All three stories also prominently feature Tsali, though in his pre-*Unto These Hills* form he is an elder, "Old Charley." It was not until his portrayal in *Unto These Hills* that Tsali would be a fiery young buck. In Stringfield's operetta, Tsali's captive family marches slowly because of the summer heat. Out of frustration over their pace, an American soldier draws blood when he prods Tsali's wife with his bayonet to spur her on. Tsali and his two sons kill him, apparently at the gates to the stockades for Tsali next opens them, freeing the captives. When Will Thomas finally finds Tsali in his cave to deliver General Scott's bargain of his life for the freedom of the refugee Cherokee, Utsala [Euchella] is already there.

The old man cogitates. His own life means little to him, but, in keeping with his acquired Christian philosophy, in which, strangely enough, he has the convert's utter belief, he realizes that "it is better than one should die, that many may live" (Stringfield 1946).

In a later scene, Tsali surrenders and is ready to be executed. As the American soldiers go to tie his hands, he is defiant.

He rebukes them thus: Tsali, brushing aside cords: "I AM A MAN, NOT AN OX TO BE TIED AND DRIVEN! I HAVE PROMISED, AND WILL NOT BREAK MY WORD TO THE WHITE MEN AS THEY HAVE DONE TO ME AND MY PEOPLE" (Stringfield 1946).

I have found no record of whether Stringfield's operetta was ever produced. But obverse the faceplate of her pamphlet reads, "Dedicated to Our Visitors," which leaves no doubt that she saw in tourism a market for her story.

While these early attempts at telling the Eastern Cherokee story through theater are seldom acknowledged, nearly every published account of the birth of *Unto These Hills* includes an origin myth for the discovery of the site on which the Mountainside Theater would be built. This tale usually follows Stephens, Jennings, Selden, and Caldwell as they tromp through the hills of Cherokee looking for that magic spot where the natural contours of the earth would carry one's voice from the valley up to the crest without amplification. Superintendent Jennings' account of their adventure speaks also to the ideology that structured the men's notion of what an ideal theater site would be.

It was a natural hollow sloping up from the creek where the mountains themselves would be a part of the scenery and would serve to shut out the sights and sounds of civilization, making the illusion of another time and people complete. (1956:26)

I think this statement, more so than the magical “This is the spot” moment typically captured in histories of *Unto These Hills*, enlightens us to the qualities these non-Indian men thought most important in telling a story about Indians. The natural environment is as much a performer in the drama as the actors on stage, for much like the Indian characters the mountains symbolize the antithesis of civilization.

The WNCAC creates the Cherokee Historical Association

As an “organization of organizations” the WNCAC was not interested in being directly responsible for the production of an outdoor drama. Thus they created the Cherokee Historical Association to work with the tribe, run the drama, and act as a clearinghouse for scholarly works on the Cherokee. It is telling that the CHA, at its inception, was chartered to have academic pursuits as a part of its mission because this is not a current function of the organization today. The CHA is not a historical society in the usual sense. The general public cannot conduct genealogical research here or use its library. Today the CHA exists only to manage its tourist attractions, but its founders imagined it broadly enough to include,

[The] research and study of the Cherokee Indians in North America, particularly in Western North Carolina and the area immediately adjacent, and of the early settlement of Western North Carolina by races other than the Indian (1956:27).

For the WNCAC the creation of a drama in Cherokee was of benefit to the entire region and similarly the CHA charter includes specific reference to the preservation of histories of non-Indians. The CHA was never a Cherokee-centric organization. It was intended to focus on the relationships among Indians, Whites, and the land. The academic arm of the CHA would become most formalized in 1951 with the creation of the Tsali Institute, an anthropological

and archaeological consortium composed of faculty from the University of North Carolina, the University of Tennessee, and the University of Georgia. After the CHA bought the Museum of the Cherokee Indian from Sam Beck and while it was still privately held, the Tsali Institute played a role in its operation, “Every year the trained anthropologists working with the Institute add to the museum’s collections” (1956:32).

Given Simpson et al’s caveat that the WNCAC was dominated by privileged outsiders, it is important that the CHA’s first Chairman was a native of Jackson County. Harry Buchanan was a man of unique talents well suited for success at the CHA. He was both a theater man, operating a playhouse south of Asheville in Hendersonville, North Carolina, and a seasoned politician having been a senator in North Carolina’s General Assembly. During the 1940s, prior to the drama’s debut, the CHA’s primary function was fundraising and construction. The EBCI showed its strong support for the production by contributing \$5,000 directly from tribal monies held in federal trust, a sum that bested the monetary pledges of all the other western North Carolina counties save wealthy Buncombe County. In the fall of 1949 as the cash strapped CHA sought to complete the Mountainside Theater and raise enough money to hire actors and dress the stage, Buchanan, acting on behalf of the CHA and the WNCAC, went to Raleigh to meet with the General Assembly and ask for a \$35,000 loan. Simpson et al note that not only was the money appropriated, but it was done so unanimously in every committee and in both houses of the legislature. Clearly this is a testament to Buchanan’s power and savvy, as well as the influence of the WNCAC. With the stellar success of *Unto These Hills* the CHA, under Buchanan’s aegis, would eventually eclipse the WNCAC as the consummate meeting ground for mountain elites.

Unto These Hills was more successful than any in the WNCAC had dared to dream. Because of the revenue it generated, the content of the drama's story, and the location of the theater on Indian land, the relationship between the tribe and the CHA would become characterized by guarded ambivalence. Starnes characterizes it thus, "The CHA was a powerful force on the reservation, but it did not exercise monopoly power over cultural tourism and related activities" (2005:168). For example, the CHA retained no direct authority over the area crafts guilds, such as the Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual, or the sidewalk shows of Cherokee's roadside Chiefs. During my fieldwork I found that many Cherokee were still filled with pride by their tradition of staging the drama, as if the sizable audiences commanded by the telling of their history somehow ratified its importance. Yet there have also been times that the tribal members have been openly hostile towards the CHA and the drama, especially when it was perceived that they were being denied access to financial resources. At the same time there are numerous stories of happy coexistence, even artistic collaboration between tribal members and the drama. Certainly there are families on the reservation with a proud multi-generational tradition of participating in the production. Nevertheless the CHA from its inception until its collapse in 2004 actively pursued its own ends and sought to retain control of the drama and its resources for as long as possible. Political concessions were made here and there, but always as part of a pattern of control.

To return to the late 1940s and early 1950s it is clear how the non-Indian interests, by sponsoring the publication of Simpson et al's history, sought to structure the way the story of the drama's success is told. The pamphlet details with precise dollar amounts how the tribe benefited from the drama in the years 1951-1955 through salaries paid, materials purchased, and tribal levy paid as well as documenting the CHA's expenditures on community

development, construction of school bus stop shelters, educational programs, and college scholarships and loans. The CHA then went on to take a leadership role in having a planning study done on how best to “develop” Cherokee. Here non-Indian ideologies surrounding these “improvements” are recognizably colonial.

There is good reason to think that the Drama has renewed the Cherokees’ pride in themselves. Certainly it has tended to bring them out of the backwater in which they have lived for many scores of years. The Association is aware, of course, that many problems have been created in the lives of these people. The Association seems to be committed to administering the bounty produced by the Drama in such a way as to bring the Cherokees gradually but steadily into full participation in modern life in North Carolina (1956:33).

By taking it upon themselves to be administrators of the bounty the CHA managed to squander a lot of good will in its relationship with the Cherokee community.

The inaugural performance

By the summer of 1950 *Unto These Hills* had already been four years in the making. In fact the drama’s debut was behind schedule, having originally been slated to open in 1948. Every possible resource was exploited at the local, state, and federal levels in order to build the theater, recruit the cast and crew, and produce the show. As George Stephens wrote in *The North Carolina Historical Review* the production, as with *The Spirit of the Smokies* which preceded it, was from the start profoundly intertwined with Cherokee community life.

The Indian School at Cherokee had in its homemaking department the teachers and the students to help with making costumes, while the manual arts department was able to make many of the stage properties, including the wonderful shiny armor worn by De Soto’ soldiers (1951:215).

Writing in the 1980s for the CHA’s self-published history, Connor describes the brio of life in the summer of 1950 as the drama’s debut took shape:

The cast began to arrive on June 5, finding many of their technical co-workers already present. The theater was incomplete, without wiring or lightboard. Mud permeated the work scene, and toilets were unavailable at the site. The roads were incomplete, the stages unfinished. Harry Davis had no door for his office and Carol White had no office at all. Nevertheless, rehearsals began immediately (1982:25).

That summer *Unto These Hills* attracted a crowd of 107,140 before peaking at an all time high of 151,774 in the summer of 1951. For the first ten years of its run the drama averaged nearly 130,000 patrons a season. In the 1950s *Unto These Hills* was more than a source of diversion for road tripping tourists, it was a pop culture phenomenon that heralded the spread of outdoor theaters across the American south.

The Trail of Tears as publicity stunt

The CHA would seek to capitalize upon their overnight success through a May 1951 publicity campaign by retracing the Trail of Tears across Tennessee from Chattanooga to Nashville, then north through Kentucky to Illinois, and finally into Missouri on their way to Oklahoma. The brainchild of John Parris (1951), an Asheville based newspaperman and sometimes public relations consultant for the CHA, the Trail of Tears delegation returned to North Carolina with a fire lit from the council fire of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. The Cherokee participating in the trip included Leroy Wahneetah, Joseph Washington, Arsene Thompson, and Vice Chief MacKinley Ross.

In an unpublished manuscript Parris recounts how during their road trip the Trail of Tears delegation were greeted as celebrities and showered with gifts. Everywhere they went their arrival was announced by marching bands, the Indians were pressed for their autographs and introduced to mayors and local dignitaries. He recounts an interesting tale from one small east Tennessee town:

Just before we passed out of the city limits we saw more than 20 children lined up along the sidewalk with two grown women. We immediately pulled to the side of the road and the kids, some of them dressed in Indian feathers carrying tommyhawks and bows and arrows began war-whooping. Ross and the others got out of their cars and crossed the highway to the group of children... Pictures were made here, our photographer, Frank Jones, seeing what he described as “just what Life Magazine wants” (Parris 1951:4).

After indulging what turned out to be a class of kindergarteners the delegation resumed their trek west, only to be waylaid once again.

Leaving there we headed on our way and had gone about two miles when a car pulled over in front of us and waved us down. The lady driving was Mrs. B.C. Smoot, and her little daughter Kathy, had been late that morning and had missed us at City Hall and Kindergarten. She said that her daughter was very disappointed and in tears so she struck out to flag us down so that the little girl could speak to the Indians (Parris 1951:5).

Retracing the Trail of Tears was an eventful and successful publicity stunt. The Cherokee stopped at the Hermitage to visit Andrew Jackson’s home and tomb. Vice-chief MacKinley Ross fumed as he paid standard admission to enter, “I never thought that I would pay to see the grave of the man who betrayed my race. We came here to forgive and forget. But it looks like the Indians can never win. They keep paying and paying even to see the grave of their enemy” (Parris 1951:6). Not only did they get their money back, as had apparently been the plan all along, but Ross also got his revenge by lighting his ceremonial pipe in front of a large sign that read “No Smoking on the Grounds.”

In Hopkinsville, Kentucky, like in every other stop along their route there were photo opportunities and staged moments for the local press and Frank Jones, the photographer that accompanied the Cherokee delegation.

Jones lined up a shot in which he grabbed a little Negro boy and stuck him into the picture. One of the [ladies from the Daughters of the American

Revolution] said, “We don’t mix white and colored around here!” MacKinley Ross put his hand on the little Negro boy’s shoulder, said, “Shoot, Mr. Jones, this is the type of stuff that will beat our Communist enemies” (Parris 1951:10).

Parris, in his manuscript, seldom recounts such antagonistic encounters. The following passage is much more typical:

From Hopkinsville we drove to Princeton, Kentucky, and were picked up by a police escort on the outside of town. We got our first glimpse of Main Street and it was jam-packed with people. They were hanging from telephone poles, out of windows, on top of the two-story buildings, every available space. There was only a brief, or I should say, a small lane through which we could drive to the courthouse (Parris 1951:10).

Indeed the purpose of the tour was not merely to spread peace and goodwill towards men, but to drum up business for *Unto These Hills*. At this the delegation was most successful for quickly it became “a regular thing for the boys to carry a batch of pamphlets around inside their tunics and at the least provocation they snap one out for the townspeople” (Parris 1951:4). Moreover, “The only disappointment that we have evidenced thus far on the Trail from the people who came to see us was that we did not have souvenirs to sell. They even wanted to buy the feathers that Joe, Mac, Arsene and Leroy wore and one woman all but jerked Mac’s from his head” (Parris 1951:23). In all likelihood, Parris’s staged retracing of the Trail of Tears contributed significantly to the drama’s all time high attendance in 1951.

Chief Osley Saunooke challenges the CHA

Although Chiefs Jarrett Blythe and Henry Bradley are the EBCI politicians most closely associated with the genesis of *Unto These Hills*, Chief Osley Saunooke also played an important role as a foil to the CHA’s early development. In *Unto These Hills*’ first season

alone the CHA generated profits of \$70,000, which tribal members and the EBCI government attempted to lay claims to. “With the great financial success of the production, several leaders began to agitate for a share of the profits, if not complete control of all profits, and for exclusive hiring of Cherokee Indians in all capacities” (Umberger 1970:89). Umberger’s euphemistic statement, that “several” Cherokee were involved, is only partially true. In fact a petition demanding ten percent of CHA gross revenue to be paid directly to the tribal government was turned over to the CHA Board of Trustees with one hundred and eighty-five Cherokee signatures (1951, June 22).

The confrontation took place at the June 1951 meeting of the CHA Board of Trustees. “At the meeting, Ross Caldwell presented a resolution with Cherokee’s signatures, requesting ten percent of the gross receipts of the Association be given ‘for relief of the old, needy, blind and destitute Cherokee on the Reservation’” (Connor 1982:49). Caldwell, owner of The Cherokee Chieftan craft shop, was a well established non-Indian businessman on the reservation before he became a CHA insider and important figure in the birth of the drama. A retired architect, Caldwell and his wife came to western North Carolina in the middle 1940s. In a collection of his scrapbooks housed in the CHA archives Caldwell writes that he arrived in Cherokee having already imagined an outdoor historical drama. When BIA Superintendent Joe Jennings alerted him that the WNCAC was developing similar plans he enthusiastically joined the team. Caldwell claims that it was he and not Albert Bell, as it is sometimes reported, who designed and oversaw the construction of the Mountainside Theater.

Though titled a “Resolution,” the 10% petition does not appear to be an act of Tribal Council, but a petition of Cherokee citizens and some tribal politicians that included eight out of twelve Tribal Council members among the signees (1951, June 22). This was probably so

that the EBCI government could maintain a working and contractual relationship with the CHA while still applying pressure through other channels. The petition expresses satisfaction that Indian labor was used to build the theater and it acknowledges that some funds are to be expended to make the stage “adequate, but not elaborate.” Yet, “no action is being contemplated by the Cherokee Historical Association to fulfill the promises made to establish some adequate welfare relief.” The undersigned thus conclude it, “not unreasonable to expect to use some of the funds derived from the theatrical production of our Cherokee Story” (1951, June 22).

The CHA Board rejected the tribe’s challenge: “It also made it clear that the Board of Trustees would continue in the future to exercise full and complete control of the drama and of other operations under its control” (Umberger 1970:90). In a letter to the CHA Board of Trustees BIA Superintendent Jennings, who was also CHA Treasurer, advised that “some statement regarding the purposes and finances of the production should be made public. Since inquiries are becoming more numerous and critical, regard for public opinion seems to require a simple explanation.” Adding urgency to his statement Jennings called for a statement of purpose and policy “immediately” and requested that the Board meet “at once” to agree on its content (1951, July 25).

Since the CHA would not agree to hand money over to the tribal government over the years it developed numerous external programs that, in addition to payroll and purchasing, would benefit tribal members. This included cash prizes at the Fall Indian fair, educational programs, loans and scholarships. The CHA was more than willing to aid the Cherokee, but only according to terms the CHA itself defined. Although these programs were designed and implemented with the best of intentions, they also served to quell discontent over non-Indian

control of the drama. “When occasional misunderstandings arose between the Historical Association and individual Cherokees, the Board responded by strengthening its effort to assist community improvement and to increase the Cherokees’ understanding of the organization’s economic situation” (Connor 1982:50).

After the 10% petition was rejected Chief Saunooke arranged for a commercial photographer from Charlotte, North Carolina, to visit the reservation and document the poverty and poor living conditions prevalent in the Big Cove community. The timing of the pictures suggest that the CHA’s decision to maintain control motivated the Chief to strengthen his case for a fair share of the drama profits. Ross Caldwell kept thirteen of these photographs in his scrapbook collection and perhaps was involved in their production as well (1951). Caldwell, who greatly admired Chief Saunooke, sacrificed his reputation in the CHA by delivering the 10% petition to the Board. Ostracized, he and his wife left Cherokee for Florida shortly thereafter.

Chief Saunooke, however, was just getting started. Unable to get the tribe a cut of the profits, he imposed a tribal levy of 3% on gross sales in June 1952. Saunooke, “claimed credit for an arrangement exempting the reservation from the state sales tax and allowing the Band to impose – and keep – an identical levy that would enable it to assume more responsibility for sanitation and police and fire protection” (130). This was a levy aimed squarely at the tourist industry and the CHA in particular. “Of the total levy paid the tribe by September 30, 1953, the Association had paid more than one quarter – 28.8%” (Umberger 1970:102). Thus, in its heyday, the CHA was the Tribe’s single most substantial source of revenue.

The 1970s – Challenges to CHA’s Influence and Power

As the United States faced challenges of empire and a crisis of capitalism in the 1970s, a variety of social movements jockeyed for recognition and concessions from the state, including American Indian groups. This was an era of Red Power epitomized by the protests of the American Indian Movement. During this time on the Eastern Band Cherokee Reservation, a politically conservative community rooted in Baptist and Methodist church life, Red Power did not flourish. According to Finger the Cherokee “viewed the growing ‘Red Power’ movement as a threat to their satisfactory working relationship with the BIA. Certainly a radical group like the American Indian Movement (AIM), headed by young urban Indians, held little appeal” (Finger 1991:154). Nevertheless, the 1970s was for the EBCI and the CHA a period of sustained conflict. Early in the decade the Tribe began to pressure the CHA to make annual contributions to their general operating expenses. The Tribe’s strategy was twofold. First it invoked a particular ideology concerning the purpose of the drama in the community as promoting social welfare and racial uplift. Second it used as a bargaining chip the land on which a new CHA-managed museum would be built.

In the middle of the decade, anthropologist Larry French – then a visiting professor at Western Carolina University – published a condemnation of the CHA and of cultural tourism among the Eastern Band generally. That this critique originated from within WCU is significant. During my field research in 2005 and 2006 I found that tribal members generally had a positive view of WCU and that the university itself, having benefited from generous donations to its performing arts center by the casino funded Cherokee Preservation

Foundation, was keenly interested in cooperating with Tribal government officials. However, this amity was not always the norm. French's critique emerged out of a historical moment when it was more common for Cherokee to be suspicious of WCU. His academic publication coincided with a scandalous article by Jane Oppy run in the Cherokee One Feather slandering Kermit Hunter and the emergence of a locally-circulated underground newspaper "The Cherokee Wildfire." Though the Wildfire had a short lifespan there would be other underground newspapers and then, much later, internet forums and blogs where tribal members could traffic in gossip and conspiracy theory. Taken together Oppy, French, and the Wildfire refocused Cherokee public attention in the mid-1970s on the relationship between the Tribe and the CHA.

By the end of the decade the highest profile conflict concerned the relationship between the CHA and its Cherokee employees, especially the perception among some tribal members that only certain jobs were open to Indians and that non-Indians generally earned more and enjoyed better benefits. An angry letter sent by a disgruntled former employee to the CHA Board of Trustees that resulted in the formation of a special committee to address the accusations epitomizes this conflict. Rather than being seen as an isolated incident, this letter is representative of a broader, long-standing issue: non-Indian control of the CHA.

The CHA negotiates with the EBCI government

In the spring of 1971 Chief Noah Powell and Chairman of Tribal Council Jonson Catolster met with the General Manager of the CHA Carol White. Margie Douthit kept minutes of the meeting. At this meeting the Tribal leaders expressed their intention to lay

claim to what they perceived as the CHA's ample largess. Their goal was to persuade the CHA to commit to making an annual contribution to the Tribe's operating expenses. At their first meeting \$20,000 was suggested, though later that would be inflated to \$25,000. White cautiously reminded the Chief and Chairman of all that the CHA did to benefit the tribe economically such as employing Indians and contracting for labor through the Cherokee Boys Club. For White it was sufficient that the CHA was providing Indian employment, but for the Tribal officials the CHA was imagined to serve a different purpose. Douthit recorded in her notes:

Johnson Catolster stated that "Yes, that is right, but the reason for founding the Association was to provide jobs for the low income families" – those who could not get work elsewhere. He said that this was the original intent of the Association from the man who... had the idea for the drama in the first place. He said that he [Catolster] was one of the first ones to work at the theater on the dozer and the man who worked with him was the one who started the outdoor drama. He was referring to Mr. Ross Caldwell, even though he did not refer to him by name. He said that it was Ross Caldwell who "dreamed up the drama". (Douthit 1971, May 19)

Even though the 10-percent petition delivered to the CHA Board was signed by Cherokee tribal members and may have originated within Chief Saunooke's inner circle, it was Caldwell the messenger who had become legendary. The memory of this non-Indian craft shop owner was being embellished with fictional deeds.

Far more effective than their moral pleas the EBCI also had a powerful bargaining chip in their negotiations with the CHA. The Tribe controlled the status of the lease on the drama's downhill parking lot and what would become the site of the Museum of the Cherokee Indian. The EBCI implied that if the CHA would make financial contributions to the government's operating expenses there would be no objections to developing that land

into a museum. White played his cards close to his chest and the following day sent an optimistic and cordial memo to Powel and Catolster. "I cannot speak for the Board of Trustees, nor even speculate on their action in regards to this request, but I know they have always been receptive to requests from the officials of the tribe" (1971, May 20).

Privately, Chairman of the Board of Trustees Harry Buchanan was less conciliatory as he felt that the Council's request for money towards the operation of tribal government was "completely out of line with our purposes." He expected the Tribal officials would yield in their request once they came before a full meeting of the Board of Trustees in September. "In the meantime," he wrote, "they should have ample time to pass the extension of our lease on the land for the museum building" (1971, May 21). The Tribe, however, sat on the lease.

That summer CHA insiders floated a variety of different solutions to the impasse. White suggested that, "Instead of turning over money to the Tribe to spend as they see fit, why don't we offer to pay the salary of one or more of the officers of the Tribe?" (1971, August 10). This was an idea supported by Francis Heazel, a founding member of the WNCAC and longtime CHA member, but Buchanan refused to budge until the issue of the museum land was resolved. Late in September, possibly after Chief Powell and Vice-Chief John Crowe met with the CHA Board as suggested by Buchanan earlier that spring, the CHA continued to play politics insisting that they would not consider the request until an operating budget and statement of income for the tribal government was provided. The following month White made a report to Council. He wrote to Buchanan and Heazel that they were especially critical of CHA practices of Indian employment. He wrote plainly to his old friends, "To be truthful, I don't think all will be satisfied until the entire organization is Indian operated" (1971, October 20).

In all of this conflict and in those described below, Carol White emerges as a brilliant micropolitical agent acting on behalf of the CHA and under the direction of its Board.

Considering the CHA's great success in working with the EBCI he must have been a very deft diplomat. It was from this position of first-hand experience and an impressive track record of success that, in a letter to Buchanan and Heazel, he wrote that the sour feelings of Cherokee leaders were rooted in the CHA's inaction on the 10-percent petition some twenty years past. Drastic steps were necessary, he felt, to right their relationship with the Tribe.

I have noticed a steady deterioration in the attitude of persons I come into contact with, and this has caused me a great deal of concern over the past several years.

However, I have long been convinced that the underlying reason for the discontent with the Association is not the matter of jobs, although the latter is one that deserves careful attention at all times, and the employment of Indian personnel whenever possible.

I think the major reason behind the hostility and discontent is that the Tribe and Tribal officials believe they are not receiving a proper return in money from the proceeds of the operation of our projects here.

Of course, you all remember the request for 10% of the gross of the revenue of "Unto These Hills" which was made by the now deceased Chief Osley B. Saunooke. At that time I opposed the proposition, because the purpose of the request was that the money be paid for an old-age home for indigent Indians. I felt this was more the problem of the Federal and State welfare offices.

In analyzing this situation here I think we must consider the land used for our projects has been practically contributed by the Tribe through various agreements and leases. We pay only \$3,600.00 per year, but have use of land which amounts to about 100 acres.

It is true that we pay 4% tribal levy on all gross receipts; but, all other businesses here pay the same tax, so in this respect we are not doing any more than other businesses established here.

Of course, we have tried to keep various projects and donations going each year for the Reservation, but in comparison with the programs now in effect through the BIA and other federal agencies, they are small indeed.

White concluded his meditation on the value of land by returning to the ongoing dispute over land for parking and the planned museum, “My opinion at present is that we are not going to be able to secure a new location for the Museum... until better relationships are established” (1971, October 21).

Harry Buchanan, in his reply, felt that the payments in tribal levy the drama and Village made were sufficient to cover the value of the land the attractions were built upon.

I feel that the tribal levy of about \$31,000 per year, most of which comes from these two attractions, is ample payment for this land. In other words, if the drama and Village were removed from this land, I would like to see them lease it annually for \$30,000 to anyone else.

To Carol White’s suggestion that the CHA reconsider the possibility of making contributions to the tribe based on a percentage of gross revenue, Buchanan was less sanguine. Even at this early date he doubted the drama could remain profitable given rising costs and decreasing sales. “I cannot foresee much chance of the drama ever making any money in the future, and I am not inclined to give the Tribe a percentage of the income from a project that is losing money” (1971, October 27).

As talks with leaders in the tribal government dragged on, the CHA turned to its oldest and most powerful ally in the EBCI, former Principal Chief Jarrett Blythe. At Carol White’s request Blythe agreed to talk with the members of the Council though he cautioned that while he may have influence over some, others would be more difficult to persuade. White cast his net widely and took advice from BIA Superintendent Ted Krenzke who suggested that to improve public relations with tribal officials CHA leadership should meet

with them individually accompanied by Chief Blythe. White then turned to Mollie Blankenship, a tribal member who had been secretary at the CHA since its inception and the first woman elected to Tribal Council. In a letter to Buchanan, White conveyed Blankenship's sentiment that another issue was sullyng CHA's reputation among Cherokee:

She, too, felt that relations with some of the officials and tribal council members are not good and that we should have more personal contact with the officials and members. She also advised that there is considerable adverse sentiment amongst the council members and other local Cherokee concerning the salary differentials between the local employees in the drama and those persons who come into Cherokee as members of the production company.

In frustration he confided to his friend, "To sum this up, I must confess that I do not believe that I have accomplished much in these discussions" (1971, November 03).

All of this – the requested contribution to tribal operating expenses, negotiating land leases for drama parking and the new museum, ill feelings regarding disparities in compensation between CHA's Indian and non-Indian employees – came to a head when Chairman of the Board of Trustees Harry Buchanan addressed the members of the Cherokee Tribal Council.

I understand there has been some criticism of the Cherokee Historical Association, and I think this is partly due to the fact that some of the newly-elected members of the Tribal Council are not familiar with many of the things the Historical Association has done over the years to help the members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (1971, November 30).

Buchanan's tactic here was similar to the one Carol White had first deployed some six months earlier in his preliminary meeting with Noah Powell and Johnson Catolster. He chose to focus on what he saw as the great economic impact CHA had made and was making on the Cherokee community in the way of tribal revenue generated through the levy, tribal members

on the payroll, tribal businesses contracted out to, and in CHA social programs that he felt benefited the tribe. Buchanan emphasized that the Board of Trustees counted “many local Indians” among its membership and that “many of the members of the Tribe have become independently wealthy” through the operation of tourist service businesses. A few weeks later the distinguished and highly respected Frell Owl addressed Council on the CHA’s behalf. As a result of Owl’s intervention a standing committee was appointed to work on improving relations with the CHA by considering “any matters of mutual interest” and to represent the Council “in the formulation of plans for a Museum for the Cherokee Reservation” (White 1971, December 16). The conflict with the tribal government early in the 1970s portended a tumultuous decade for the CHA and it would not be long before other controversies asserted themselves.

Dissenting Voices: Jane Oppy, Larry French, and “The Cherokee Wildfire”

In 1976 and 1977 a group of anonymous writers claiming to be tribal members wrote and circulated an underground newspaper under the name “The Cherokee Wildfire.” The Wildfire was something of a clearinghouse for local gossip and conspiracy theories, but cast itself as a democratic necessity in light of what they perceived as a culture of fear and, in the case of the tribally owned newspaper, The Cherokee One Feather, censorship. The Wildfire’s editors were especially prolific in penning columns that alleged nepotism, conflict of interest, misuse of federally funded programs, intimidation, and that criticized specific Tribal officials and their families. The editors of the Wildfire seem to have thought themselves sensibly paranoid, suggesting that if it was difficult for readers to find their paper that “certain people

have been ordered to search them out and destroy all copies they find” (1976, December 23). Their constant antagonists were the Tribal Council and the BIA, “If our Tribal Council wants to silence the Wildfire they have only to become a fair and equal governing body” (1976, December 23). They saw themselves first and foremost as a legitimate news source, “One of the policies of the Wildfire is to print factual information, not rumors” (1977, April 05). For the duration of the paper’s run the editors were constantly refuting all claims that they printed gossip while at the same time printing remarks with the caveat that they were unsubstantiated. Their logic for this double standard was, “if there is no reason for gossip, there would be none” (1977, January 20).

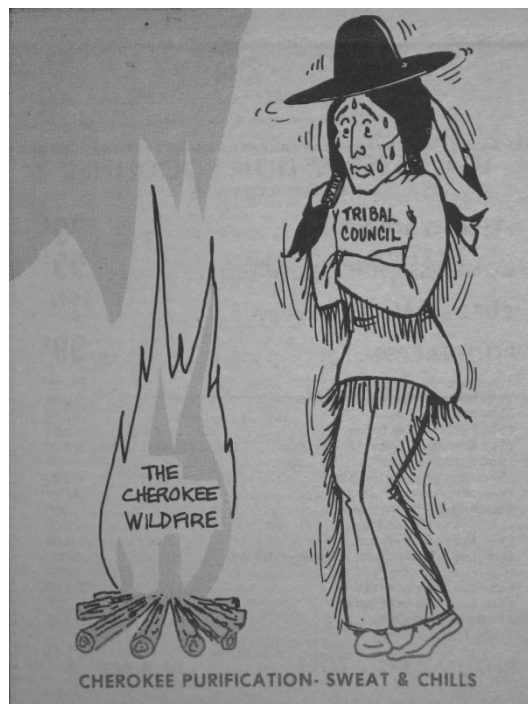


Fig.1 – from *The Cherokee One Feather*, February 2, 1977

Among these issues of major interest the Wildfire did from time to time take up issues pertaining to tourism and even, in the words of one of their readers, “bring out a few points on the Historical” (1976, December 23). For example, the Wildfire twice (1976,

December 01, 1977, June 13) brought attention to what it saw as Cherokee's "eyesores," lack of sidewalks, parking, public restrooms and water fountains. They questioned the enforcement of code ordinances and ridiculed the tone set by low-brow tourist traps. "Do you get the feeling when you walk thru Cherokee that it is more like a cheap Carnival Midway? Real cheap... a sort of 'step this way folks' type thing" (1977, June 13).

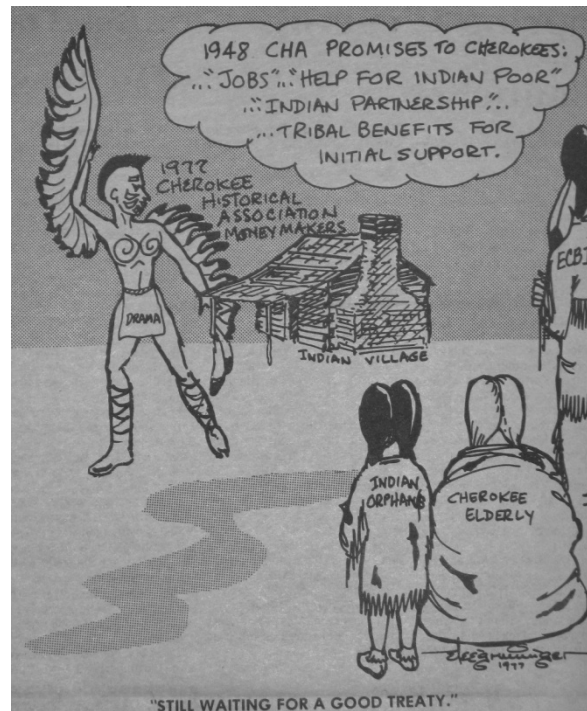


Fig.2 – from *The Cherokee One Feather*, March 30, 1977

By January 14, 1977, Carol White was aware that the Wildfire had made the CHA the subject of one of their diatribes. He wrote in a letter to the Board of Trustees that, "I don't think the issues raised deserve an answer from us, because I think the various projects of CHA are well known among the members of the tribe. However, if you wish me to prepare a response to this I will do so" (White 1977, January 14). Below this typed letter, Mollie Blankenship noted in her own script, "Carol: In my opinion this should be ignored. If the

editors of 'The Wildfire' want answers I think they should present their questions on a person to person basis." Of course, since the Wildfire was an anonymous paper no underground journalist worth his or her salt would appear in person to interview as it would out their secret identity.

The subject of White's concern was a curiously introspective piece, uncharacteristic in tone among the sarcastic screeds that predominated in the Wildfire. Under the title "Looking Back" the anonymous author reflected on the change he or she had witnessed on the reservation. "On these days when the snow is falling and it is peaceful and quiet a person tends to take time to remember the good times of the past... The old village the way it was when I grew up."

I well remember one Indian chief, Carl Standingdeer... I also remember the people he worked for; as I suppose a lot of the adults of today do. Mr. Standingdeer worked for the Caldwell's. It seems if I recollect right Mr. Caldwell was an Architect. He had a dream of an Amphitheater for the Reservation. In remembering I cannot help but wonder if Unto These Hills has done for the Eastern Cherokee People what Mr. Caldwell would have liked. I believe he would have liked to have seen it be of some benefit to our people and I fail to see anything it has done other than offer seasonal employment to a very few.

Practically everyone of the Tribal members who remembers Mr. Caldwell knows he was treated unfairly in respect to this amphitheatre and also believe that a group of power hungry persons took this dream of a better life for our people and used it to further their own selfish ends (1977, January 12).

If it is true that "a lot of the adults of today" and "Practically everyone" are represented in this sentiment, then the legend of Ross Caldwell remained in the Cherokee collective memory long after his departure. Here Caldwell seems almost saintly as the respectful employer of Carl Standingdeer, who is widely regarded as the first of Cherokee's roadside Chiefs. The ostracism he endured for delivering the 10-percent petition is like martyrdom.

While the Wildfire focused most of its rage on what it perceived as corruption in Tribal government, particularly in what they regarded as unfairness in hiring practices, they did return their attentions to the CHA at least once more. In the issue of March 12, 1977, the Wildfire editors wrote, “A few points we as the Eastern Band should consider in our dealings with the Cherokee Historical Association.” After taking shots at the CHA for building “large nice homes” on reservation land for the top managerial staff, the Wildfire got down to jobs.

Who gets the jobs? It would be a sight to have a living Indian village without Indians wouldn't it; but lets not have an Indian Manager, it just wouldn't look right.

The play: consider the pay discrimination. Major roles are taken by non-Indian actors – even the Indian roles; when an Indian does get a major role the pay automatically drops.

It would seem the Indian has managed to give and give more and more to the CHA only to receive a token crumb from their table of success... It is my understanding that when the original agreement was made with the CHA and the Tribe, 10 to 15 percent of their (CHA) net gain would be used for the sick, indigent, aged, and orphaned (1977, March 12).

From this writer's perspective there never was a 10-percent petition delivered by Caldwell to the CHA Board, which was subsequently rejected. There was instead an imagined deal struck between the Tribe and the CHA, which has since been ignored by the CHA.

The local newspaper, The Cherokee One Feather, often fell victim to the impassioned attacks of The Cherokee Wildfire who labeled it the bullhorn of the EBCI government. In short they saw the One Feather's claims to be a genuine newspaper to be a mere fig leaf disguising its true function as an organ of propaganda. Yet in 1977 the One Feather ran a series of three political cartoons on the Cherokee Wildfire, the CHA, and Kermit Hunter. The latter two following shortly after a scathing piece by Jane Oppy that attacked Hunter as a racist (March 16, 1977). Under the pretext of introducing the latest Hunter penned Indian

drama, this time about the Creek William McIntosh, Oppy queried Hunter in interview about how Indian people have reacted to the liberties he takes with their history.

“Who do you mean?” Hunter asked, when asked if young Indians seeking their cultural roots find his ideas offensive. “Do you mean fullbloods? There are hardly any of those left. Most Indians today are mostly white.”

“They had nothing until the white missionaries got hold of them, taught them to read and write, fed them, clothed them.” Hunter sounds like a racist. But he prefers to call himself a “One-worlder, a U.N. man.” He says he would like to see the elimination of all racial distinctions, the whiter, the better. “Everything the Indian has learned, he learned through white blood.”

The playwright sees no redeeming qualities in the desire of the Indians to remain where they were and worship their own gods on their ancestral lands. To Hunter’s way of thinking, that never got anyone anywhere. It’s the white, who moved to colonize, to push westward, says Hunter. “That’s his greatness.”

In the fallout to this piece’s publication were a series of letters between Hunter and Carol White in which the playwright defended his reputation and took issue with what he says were outright falsehoods and quotations used out of context.



Fig.3 – from *The One Feather*, March 23, 1977

Not long after the Oppy piece was published Carol White granted an interview to The Cherokee One Feather, (Holt 1977, April 27). I feel, as a scholar who has read the majority of issues from The One Feather's run since its inception, that there is not another piece in that newspaper's history that matches this one in length. The headline "Historical Association Explains Many Points" above the fold on the front page carries over to a full five-column page of uninterrupted text.

The article begins with issues of land, rent, and lease for the drama, the Village, and the parking lots – issues of seemingly perennial concern for the CHA in its quest for better community relations. White explains that the CHA first received permission to construct a house, the Davis cottage, from Joe Jennings in 1951. Then in 1952 Tribal Council permitted additional land for the purpose of building cast housing. Specific dollar amounts are affixed to payroll, cash on hand, community donations, and tribal levy paid. White revealed some unflattering information that portended poorly for the CHA's financial future, "The average net proceeds which the Historical Association has realized each year has been... less than the average capital outlay each year for the same period."

Finally the One Feather asked, "Is pay for Indians and non-Indians the same for the same employment?" To which White responded, "As near as we can judge, every employee is paid equally for equal work... Where there have been inequities, we have tried to correct them when made aware of it." This was followed by the question "Have you any plans to eventually being absorbed by the Tribe and give the reins of the organization to qualified Indians?" To which White could only muster, after some digression, "The operations of the Drama and the Oconaluftee Indian Village are very complex, and I feel they [the Trustees of

the CHA] would wish to carefully consider any proposed changes to be made in their management and operation.”

After leaping to the defense of Kermit Hunter, White concluded that CHA and the drama had made life better for the Cherokee.

In my judgment we have more than fulfilled the purposes for which CHA was formed, and the obligation assumed for use of land belonging to the Eastern Band of Cherokee... At no time have the trustees of the Association promised or intended to finance aid to old persons, dependent children or a childrens home. We have used surplus funds in the past for projects helpful to people on the Reservation, and I'm sure the trustees will continue to do so as any money is available.

That spring would have been quiet as the 1977 summer tourist season was approaching, but clearly the issue of fairness at CHA and *Unto These Hills* was on the mind of many a person to warrant coverage such as this.

After the tourists had gone home in the fall of 1977 *The Indian Historian* published an article by anthropologist Larry French, “Tourism and Indian Exploitation: A Social Indictment” (French 1977b). As the title implies French’s piece is an attack and he does not beat around the bush as to who he perceives is responsible for the state of cultural tourism on the reservation. Some parts of the article are plain and reasonable in their complaint as when he discusses the fact that the majority of Cherokee engaged in tourism are employed as low-wage seasonal workers. He writes that such labor conditions have, “led many Cherokee to question the supposed benefits they receive from ‘tourism’” (1977b:19).

At other, more heated turns in the article French traffics freely in Reservation gossip and conspiracy theory, apparently taking them as fact. If read as documentation of the mindset of one faction of Cherokee in the late 1970s rather than for its interpretative conclusion French’s article is quite revealing about local anxieties over tourism. For example

he calls out the Cherokee Historical Association, “long recognized as the ‘hidden government’ of the Eastern Band,” but without detailing how the CHA directed the EBCI in any particular instance. He excoriates the tourism industry owner class, those “white businessmen who carry the money off the reservation.” However in the case of the CHA the drama was generating hardly enough income to sustain itself. After taking time to digress into denigrations of Western Carolina University, which he sees as in cahoots with the CHA, and President Gerald Ford, whose office allegedly mistook the CHA for the EBCI, French concludes that cultural tourism is responsible for animosity among area Whites directed at Indians.

In a move that shows just how much French relies upon local folklore in place of documented history, he also re-presents the legend of the 10-percent petition as fact. He writes that the CHA, “when petitioning for tribal recognition... stated their specific purpose as being that of directly providing assistance to the indigent, orphaned and aged Cherokees.” He continues, “Instead of paying the ten percent of its net profit to the tribe, as originally planned, it seems to have used every device available in shirking these responsibilities (1977b:19-20). Setting aside the non sequitur about the CHA requiring “recognition” from the Tribe, French’s attitude mirrors that of the Cherokee Wildfire.

Carol White was made aware of Dr. French’s publication when he received a memo to the effect that their allies at the American Indian Travel Commission stood ready to refute his article (Douthit 1977, September 15). White promptly made his case to Hillary Osborn, director of the AITC. He wrote, “The Association concerns itself with the operation of the outdoor drama, “Unto These Hills”, and the Oconaluftee Village, and does not meddle in the affairs of the Tribe... at all times the tribal government is represented [at Board meetings] by

its two principal administrators [Principal Chief and Chairman of Council]. Of the nineteen members now serving on the Board of Trustees, six are members of the Eastern Band” (1977, September 19). Working off of White’s talking points Osborn prepared a letter to the editor of *The Indian Historian*.

Members of our staff and I read with great shock the recent article [by Larry French]... It is incomprehensible to us that the Indian Historian would publish an article replete with such inaccuracies.

We believe the article represents a strong injustice to the elected leadership of the Eastern Band of Cherokee... As such, we request a retraction of the article and an apology to the affected organizations and individuals of the Eastern Band of Cherokee (1977, October 03).

Rupert Costo, President of the American Indian Historical Society, his letterhead proudly declaring “Founded and Directed by American Indian Scholars,” wrote a reply to Osborn. Costo’s letter not only reiterated the right of *The Indian Historian* to publish all types of opinion, he suggested there was sympathy for French’s viewpoint among Cherokee.

Considerable support for the article has come from the Cherokee people on the Qualla Boundary, and if we were to publish them all, it would be an even more severe indictment of the Cherokee Historical Society and the effect that particular type of tourism has had on the people.

We can only publish your response to the article, and we will certainly do that. A ‘retraction,’ such as you request is out of the question. Dr. French has the right to his opinion. So too do the people themselves, who support this opinion. Indeed you have no right whatever to take such a posture with us, to make ‘demands’ upon us, in an effort to prevent freedom of expression and freedom of speech.

I am wondering, as most of us who are Indian are wondering, just how many Indian people are involved with (actively) and working for the American Indian Travel Commission. We have had several complaints about this group (1977, October 17).

As the dust settled on this squabble, White wrote to Osborn in genuine befuddlement, “I still don’t know what type of tourism is so objectionable to Larry French or the American Indian

Historical Society. The Cherokee Historical Association was established with the support of the tribal officials, and the Tribal Council, and I believe it is carrying out the intent and purpose for which it was set up... I guess it is impossible to satisfy everyone" (1977, November 01).

French defended himself from Osborn's rebuttal in a letter printed in *Wassaja* (French 1977a) in which he wrote that years were spent researching the piece and that a cabal of powerful politicians and businessmen were persecuting him. He rejected any overtures from the Council and Chief, who to his mind could only ever support the tourism industry. He decried the financial injustice that the Cherokee allegedly endure at the hands of tourism promoters, but reserved the most alarm for the "destruction of these people's cherished traditional heritage" by means of their misrepresentation through attractions such as *Unto These Hills*. In conclusion French threw down the gauntlet daring the elite to submit to a total and unbiased audit that would include the tribe itself, every tribal enterprise and Council member, and the CHA. He noted that, "This audit should include salaries, profits, and the like, as well as differentiating between Indians and non-Indians, and whenever possible between real-Indians and white-Indians" (1977a:8).

Setting aside his occasional irresponsibility and non sequiturs French seems to envision himself in the mode of anthropologist as hero, here airing out dirty laundry and casting light onto darkened backroom deals. Yet all communities great and small are shaped in part by backroom deals and even some aspects of elected government remain "hidden." Ultimately French provides only hearsay and no specific evidence of any direct CHA hand in shady deals. Overlooked is perhaps the CHA's greater sin, which lays not in some supposed sinister plot or grand scheme to bilk the Indians, but rather in the way it handled its day-to-

day business such that a small group of outsiders were able to hold onto Cherokee as their private clubhouse for as long as possible. CHA leadership allowed *Unto These Hills* to collapse because the primary purpose of the organization was not running the theater but providing a meeting ground for mountain elites to socialize and network. As the sun set on the drama's marketability and prominence as a tourist attraction, a younger generation of regional business leaders came to the fore outside of the status conferred by CHA membership. The organization became obsolete to its socialite constituency and then the drama collapsed.

Trouble with Cherokee Employees

One of the original purposes for creating the CHA and staging the drama was regional economic development. This was intended to benefit Cherokees by providing seasonal employment in the tourism industry and all of western North Carolina by drawing tourists and branding the area. Out of this business agenda emerged Cherokee discontent over what some perceived as inequalities among Indian and non-Indian employees at the CHA. These critics of the CHA held that there was a pattern of discrimination against Indians that limited their access to management positions off stage and starring roles on stage and they charged that the few Indians that did obtain the most visible positions were paid comparatively less than their non-Indian counter parts. However those involved in the production of the drama countered that it was consistently difficult to recruit and retain Cherokees to be in the cast and crew, hence the need to look off-reservation for qualified employees. Often the CHA management explained the lack of Cherokee enthusiasm for CHA employment in terms of

the availability of better paying jobs elsewhere or in terms of their supposed shyness. As Carol White wrote:

We are finding that fewer and fewer Tribal members are available for seasonal employment, such as the 13 weeks period of the production and showing of “Unto These Hills”. While we wish to keep as many Tribal employees as possible in the production, we cannot help but be encouraged by the fact that many of the people formerly in the play are now working elsewhere on an annual basis (1967, October 16).

However the reluctance of Cherokee to seek out jobs at the CHA was not only due to the timing of the drama’s production. Because some Cherokees perceived that relations between the non-Indian management and the Indian employees were not equitable they tended to avoid the drama altogether.

In a letter dated October 12, 1979, a former CHA employee whose name will be withheld sent a disgruntled note to the general manager and the members of the Board of Trustees. In his letter he accused Carol White of misappropriating CHA funds and surreptitiously covering his tracks, writing “I do not think the Trustees and Members know just how CHA is being operated.” Among his list of grievances was what he saw as ineffective external audit practices, a series of questionable reimbursements paid to the manager, his alleged personal use of a company car, his generous retirement benefits and a policy of extended sick leave that was provided to a select group of insiders only.

I also know some of you will say “he is only bitter because his job was abolished” but not so. I hate to see one man take over CHA as if he “owned” it. The General Manager made the statement to me “that the Trustees would do anything he said”. I wonder if this is true? If it is, CHA needs a new set of Trustees (Confidential 1979, October 12).

Carol White, the CHA's chief micropolitical operator, recognized that this discontent was systemic and acted quickly to form a committee to review the accusations. He moved deftly to defend his large retirement package, which with the approval of the Board Finance Committee was designed to recognize his advancing age by compensating for the years of service he had provided without retirement benefits. However, there was no such above table explanation for his wife who received retirement benefits without receiving salary so she could also claim unemployment benefits. As for the company car, White clarified, "The car used on occasions is not 'my' car, although I use it frequently and keep it at my house when not in use" (1979, October 18). The manager felt that the CHA, like most any other company, would be unable to fund sick leave and medical coverage for seasonal workers. He wrote, "The Indian employees of CHA come under the BIA and Public Health program which provide medical benefits far beyond the BCBS coverage the non-Indian personnel has" (1979, October 18). However grateful they are to have health care, some American Indians might refute such praise of the IHS.

In a self-legitimizing ritual the CHA convened a meeting of the Special Committee to evaluate Carol White's explanation. Margie Douthit kept the minutes. It was clarified that the manager did own a car which served his personal needs and he reiterated that his special retirement package had been okayed by the Finance Committee and "due to Mr. White's age and expected retirement date that an effort should be made to 'catch up' payments for him" (Douthit 1979, October 19). All of his requested reimbursements were accepted as is and without comment. As for the special deal arranged for his wife, even though payments to her annuity were included in the budget the Special Committee felt that White had violated regulations and ordered an end to it.

The Special Committee then turned its attention to the letter by the recently fired CHA employee that had initiated the whole controversy. They commented, “if he was dissatisfied with the operation, he should have voiced this to the Board of Trustees,” and they noted that since his firing certain memoranda kept in his office file had disappeared. The Committee reached a consensus that no wrongdoing existed and advised that the Chairman should report these findings to the general CHA membership at their annual meeting, so long as that address did not mention “the individual terms discussed... but simply advise the membership that the charges are without foundation” (1979, October 19). The minutes then note that the committee meeting adjourned for lunch.

Remembering the Present: Writing a History of the 1950s in the 1980s

Much as it had done in the 1950s with the Simpson et al piece on the WNCAC, in the 1980s the CHA decided it needed to commission a history of the organization. Again the CHA turned to UNC – Chapel Hill, this time retaining a visiting professor of history, William Connor, to pen a short pamphlet *A History of “Unto These Hills.”* Not surprisingly correspondence from the CHA archives show that more than thirty years after the drama’s debut the CHA was still very concerned about its image on the reservation and how local perceptions might impact its political capital. The anthropologist Johannes Fabian, in his iconoclastic ethnography of popular painting and history in Zaire, *Remembering the Present* (1996), explores the relationships among the past, the present, and performance. Fabian suggests that to look at history as performance necessitates seeing it as something staged, a production, rather than a kind of representation. This processual understanding of the

production history is “as action or as events that occur in time and space, in physical and cultural settings, in the presence of objects as well as persons” (1996:249). Hence, the performance of history is done in consideration of the continuing relevance of present predicaments in memory. The following letters reveal similar careful considerations.

Dr. William P. Connor, Jr. to Carol White (1982, March 6)

Dear Carol,

I (finally) have completed what I consider to be a final draft of the history of the Cherokee Historical Association manuscript... I will be pleased to consider any suggestions or changes...

Carol White to Dr. William P. Connor, Jr. (1982, March 18)

Dear Bill:

[After] reading Chapter V on “Controversies of the Fifties”, Margie, Frank Brown, and I have reached the conclusion that this chapter should be re-written. You see, we wish to work effectively with a number of projects of obvious benefit to the area and to re-open old scars could only reduce the improved relations with many people who are important to accomplish... certain goals.

We would not like to disturb this relationship by reminding them of old controversies.

Carol White to CHA Chairman of the Board of Trustees Frank Brown (1982, March 23)

Dear Frank:

...All-in-all, I think Dr. Connor has done a fine job, and I think he will make most of the revisions you request. CHA has full control over the final text, by the way.

Margie Douthit to Carol White (1982, April 5)

Mr. White:

Bill Connor called this morning. He said he would begin work on revising Chapter V of the history and would send it to us, hopefully within the next two weeks.

Dr. William P. Connor, Jr. to Carol White (1982, May 10)

Dear Carol,

I finally have a revised version of Chapter Five. The emphasis in the chapter has been shifted slightly so that, while the conflicts of the fifties are mentioned, the stress now is on the success the Association experienced in overcoming the disagreements. Moreover, the chapter does not dwell on the conflicts, but merely mentions them in passing without describing either the issues in conflict or the individuals involved.

Margie Douthit to Dr. William P. Connor, Jr. (1982, June 30)

Dear Bill:

Please telephone me – I need to discuss your payment for re-writing Chapter V.

“Tragedy and Triumph”: The Fall and Rise of the Cherokee Historical Association in the New Cherokee Renaissance, 1996-2006

Years ago, when I used to drive home to Cherokee, and I'd drive from Atlanta – I was flying in the Atlanta airport – and I'd drive by all those beautiful places in Gwinnett County, the fastest growing county in the country at the time. Explosive growth. And I'd come home to (laughs) to my little tacky-tacky-shacky on Soco. You know, I mean, it was really kind of a come down. But now the opportunity to really be a magnet to draw and be proud of what's here, that's an unbelievable feeling. I just wish I were 38 instead of 68 so I'd have more years to contribute to the process.

Lewis Harding

There's just so much opportunity in Cherokee now, I mean, there's just so much going on... It's really just a completely different place than it was. When I was growing up here there was no opportunity. And people that lived in Cherokee were looked on like, “Eh. They didn't do much.” You had to go somewhere and do something else. Then people would go, “Oh! You lived in Atlanta. Ooh!”

James Bradley

Cherokee in the early years of the new millennium was a very special time and place to be. The economic success of Harrah's Cherokee Casino was well established and its revenue was driving the tribal economy and significantly impacting the entire economy of Western North Carolina in five major ways. First, it was the largest tourist destination in the state of North Carolina annually attracting millions of visitors who opened their pocket books and swiped their credit cards at regional restaurants, hotels, and shops. Second, Harrah's Cherokee Casino and Hotel quickly became the largest single employer west of Asheville, North Carolina, with a payroll of thousands of employees, many of whom earn living wages and benefits. Third, half of the Cherokee's share of the revenue flowed directly into the tribal government, which was rapidly expanding to offer new employment opportunities and

improved services for its community. Fourth, the second half of the Cherokee's share of the revenue was divided equally among its enrolled members in bi-annual per capita payments boosting the standard of living and spending power of tribal members, greatly benefiting the region's retailers. Fifth, through amendment of the gaming compact with the state of North Carolina in 2000 the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, a massively endowed granting agency, was created to funnel millions of dollars into educational, cultural, and environmental programs. Harrah's is a tremendously powerful economic engine and large-scale casino gaming has brought with it broad social and political changes to the Eastern Band. Some Cherokee refer to these changes collectively as a "Renaissance." From the point of view of those Cherokee involved with the Cherokee Historical Association the cutting edge of the reservation-wide Renaissance is the renovation of *Unto These Hills* and Mountainside Theater.

The title of this chapter, "Tragedy and Triumph," is a phrase borrowed from the *Unto These Hills* folders, the tri-fold tourist pamphlets distributed throughout Asheville and points west. These glossy advertisements were once the CHA's primary form of advertising and they depict scenes from the drama: white soldiers with rifles surround the Indians, sagely Robert Bushyhead portrays Elias Boudinot holding the Bible. A melodramatic tagline for a melodramatic performance, "Tragedy and Triumph" was intended to encapsulate the Cherokee experience of Removal from suffering along the Trail of Tears and the martyrdom of Tsali, to the survival of the remnant Cherokee and Junaluska's homecoming. To me it could just as easily be applied to the CHA itself. What was once a mighty empire of successful tourist attractions eventually crumbled only to be resurrected by the very people it forcibly represented. Even the phrase's wincing melodrama is valid as the change of power at

the Association became a literal tearjerker for many key players, some research participants even teased me that my dissertation was really about the “drama behind the drama.” But ultimately its messianic sentiment echoes one common among Cherokee in the contemporary scene – that the Cherokee people will always rise and what was once debased will be redeemed through triumphant return.

Renaissance

The use of the term “Renaissance” by some members of the Cherokee community to describe the rapid change and growth in their community is intentional. It purposefully draws a connection between the present and the past. This is not at all unusual that a people would want to redefine their collective sense of self by making recourse to narratives of the past. In the case of the Cherokee, the historical moment being invoked is a previous period of Renaissance at the beginning of the nineteenth century, prior to Removal, when the largely disparate and autonomous Cherokee tribal townships consolidated themselves into a significantly more united “nation” in opposition to U.S. colonialism. Among Cherokee who use the term, Renaissance invokes the genius Sequoyah’s syllabary, the bilingual *Cherokee Phoenix* newspaper, and the sophisticated legal struggle waged against U.S. colonialism and the state of Georgia via three landmark Supreme Court cases (McLoughlin 1986).

The notion of Renaissance and the image of the phoenix rising from the ashes are sometimes organized into a local philosophy of Cherokee history. The fortunes of the Cherokee people, it is argued, are cyclical. Forces beyond the control of individuals act upon the tribe smiting it down, but through the effort and willpower of Cherokee people the tribe

always becomes great again. So whereas the classic *Unto These Hills* portrayed Cherokee as “down-trodden” and hiding in caves, as one speaker put it, “That’s not who we were – that’s who we were at that point in history.” That weakened state was the result of U.S. military force, “That’s how we were affected and that’s how we had to behave, but thousands of years before that when we were the strongest tribe in the southeast. And everybody had to deal with us. Now we’re the biggest employer west of Asheville and the biggest attraction in North Carolina.” The Cherokees can be knocked down, but they always get back up. They may suffer, but they always survive.

There are many interlocking aspects of the contemporary Renaissance and, to the mind of many Cherokees, its most important facet is language revitalization. “Language is the thread on which the beads of culture rest,” artist and entrepreneur Natalie Smith told me, “Its language that ties them all together. Without the language you have a handful of beads that are fragile and disparate and not connected. You could lose a few of them because you can’t talk about it. But if you don’t have language then your culture is... its fragile... its vulnerable.” This revitalization is taking shape through a tribally run pre-school immersion room where toddlers are only exposed to the Cherokee language. For tribal elder and traditionalist Myrtle Driver teaching the language is key to preserving Cherokee tradition, “That is very important to me: language and our traditions. It’s not that easy to teach the traditions if your children or people are not speakers. So as I’m teaching the traditions I have to teach the language along with it.”

But the Renaissance is much broader than the growing success of language revitalization. Natalie Smith anticipates the change will take its time unfolding and be pervasive in its impact. “It’s all going to come into play,” she says, “Every aspect of the

community will come into question. Because the change is upon us and everywhere. It's like a big cloud sitting over us, raining on us, and rain touches everything, just like right now. It just takes time for certain things to react to the rain." When I asked artist and musician Paula Nelson to describe her sense of the atmosphere of change on the Cherokee reservation she broke out into song. Belting out the first four bars of "Revolution" by The Beatles, Paula left little doubt that she saw the Renaissance as a total community phenomenon. Like the optimism conveyed by a purifying rain shower or the rising chords of a pop song, one of the most profound elements of the Renaissance seems to be its intertwining of nationalist pride with genuine possibility and opportunity. On a household level, Cherokee standards of living are rising such that families and individuals can tend to the necessities and plan for the future. As James Bradley put it, "Now that we don't have to worry about how we're going to feed our kids and buy them winter clothes and how we're going to make car payments in the off season and the roads are paved and the hospital's getting better – those infrastructural things are being taken care of now." Annette Clapsaddle, assistant to Principal Chief Michel Hicks, understands the same changes from a governmental level. "I think we can now afford to do things right. We don't have to depend on the federal government to pay for everything. If we want the best technology in diabetes care, then we can get it."

Physically the town of Cherokee is rapidly changing too, thanks to low interest loans made available through the tribal government to businesses who want to update their structures. According to Annette Clapsaddle, "Cherokee looks better," than it did five or ten years ago. Old-fashioned "primitive" signage such as oversized arrowheads to point the way to hotels and shopping has come down. Instead Cherokee aspires to become a "Santa Fe of the east" with an emphasis on arts and Indian culture, catering to a more upscale clientele.

There are new EMS and Fire depots, new patrol cars for the tribal police, and a new women's center. Qualla Housing is expanding into planned communities of large ranch houses and compact townhomes to meet the needs of a growing population as more Cherokee are returning from life off the reservation to live on their land. Construction has begun on all new school buildings that will consolidate elementary, middle, and high schools onto a single campus with enviable athletic and arts facilities. Numerous research participants noted the dwindling supply of "Indian cars," a local term for old and battered vehicles, which were once ubiquitous but have become scarce as more people can afford to buy new cars.

There is also a strong cultural component to the nationalism in the contemporary Cherokee Renaissance. As accomplished dancer Eddie Swimmer stated, "I see more people being more aware of their culture now." Other participants alternately glossed this as increasing "pride" or a growing Cherokee "spirituality." Principal Chief Michel Hicks, at certain cultural events or off reservation acting as cultural ambassador, will make appearances in a Cherokee ribbon shirt in contrast to his usual business attire. The Warriors of AniKituhwa, a dance group established through research conducted by the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, are also frequently pointed to as exemplary of the cultural revitalization in the new Renaissance. Whether dancing off the reservation at the National Museum of the American Indian, or dancing as the high school football team takes the field on autumn Friday nights, the Warriors evoke a Cherokee identity not of the skilled adaptation and controlled acculturation for which the Cherokee are so well known, but of marshal strength and prowess. The Miss Cherokee pageant too has changed from recent Museum research, adding a new traditional dress category with wraps and leggings.

It was in the midst of this newfound economic security, political power, and cultural pride that the Cherokee Historical Association, the white dominated organization which owned and operated *Unto These Hills*, collapsed into bankruptcy and was resuscitated through tribal intervention. The new Cherokee management sees itself as “a big leader” in the reservation-wide Renaissance. Chairman of the Board of Trustees Lewis Harding explicitly sees the remaking of the Cherokee Historical Association as a part of a larger remaking of Cherokee, “It’s out on the point of the effort, on the thrust.” As Yona Wade put it, “We have a great opportunity to educate our people who, some of them took the old show as fact and it’s not... We’re trying to get back to the truth. Well – yeah, get back to the truth. To tell the true story, to tell the correct history.” In this chapter I describe the context in which the CHA collapsed after decades of economic success, the tribal takeover of the organization, and the difficulties the new Cherokee-led management faced in bringing the CHA up to date and charting a new course for the future.

Events leading to the Cherokee takeover of the CHA

For years as one of the drama’s featured principal actors, long time non-Indian cast member Emmett Furrow played Junaluska in the classic *Unto These Hills*. With a touch of sadness he recalled one event in the early 2000s that stood in for the decaying theater he and many of his closest friends had invested in so heavily.

The swimming pool was always kind of a symbol of what an easy life it could be up here. Because in the afternoons all the locals would come up and use our pool and the people who lived up here would. Sunday afternoon was a great thing because everybody had their day off and we’d just kind of hang out in the pool. And then late night after parties people would use the pool. Or in the middle of the night if you just wanted to swim. And sometimes it was

clothing optional after those Saturday night parties, there's no lights down there. It was just a great thing. And then, I think it was around 2000, there are streams that run underground and one of them flooded during a particularly rainy spring. And because the pool itself was a big iron shell that had been dropped into the ground all the water underneath it floated the pool up out of the ground. And when it came up, it came up with all the concrete around it tearing to pieces. The diving board pitched up this way. So it was completely unsafe and nothing could be done about it. And we had to look at it that way for about two years. We'd walk by and saw: this is not what it used to be. This big part of what we had up here is now gone. And then it would be kind of a harbinger of what was about to happen with us in the show all the way around. The fun time's over, all the little perks that we had are disappearing and this is about to turn into something else completely. So when they came in and just buried it that was probably a good move. Not to have that reminder.

Whether the merry freedom of late night parties or the sun-dappled leisure of a summer Sunday afternoon the theater's swimming pool was a location of pleasure and community. When a force of nature renders it a ruin the remainder becomes a painful reminder until a there can be a decent burial. This is not an inappropriate introduction to the demise of the Cherokee Historical Association, which while not necessarily unanticipated – one need only look at the declining annual attendance to see that its existence was threatened – was nonetheless heartrending for many. The emotional investment in this institution among non-Indians and Indians alike would combine with its economic function in the tourism industry and its role in producing and reproducing cultural and historical representations of the Cherokee to complicate its subsequent resurrection.

I begin this story in the year 1996 because it was the beginning of an eight-year run of profit loss that would eventually drain the CHA of its cash reserves. However, in terms of attendance rates there has been a declining trend since the mid-1970s. The year 1996 is significant because only once in the past ten years had the CHA closed in the red, 1989. At the time the CHA Board of Trustees was not particularly alarmed by the loss because their

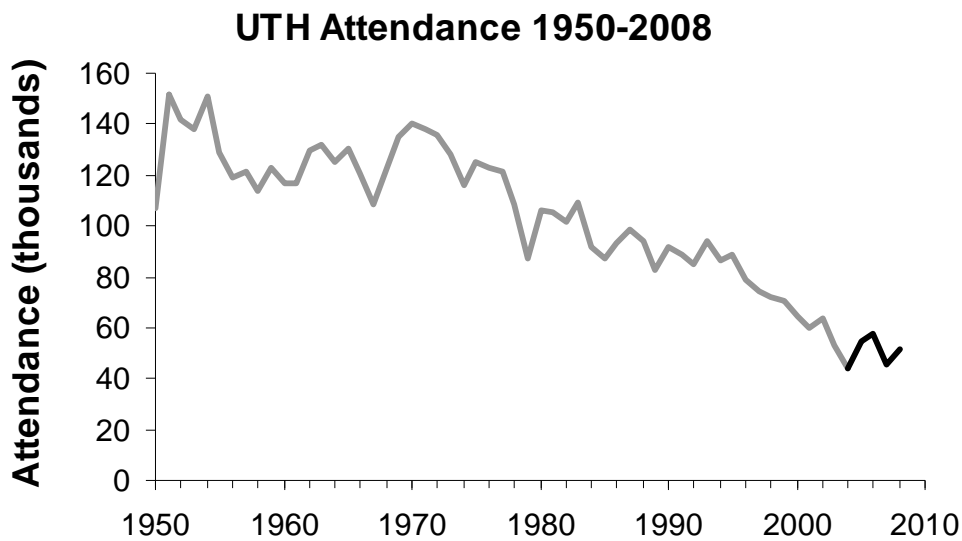


Figure 4. *Unto These Hills* attendance, 1950-2008 (Cherokee management in bold)

total cash available for operation was more than \$1.8 million, a ten-year high. In 1996 the CHA paid \$138,000 in tribal levy on ticket sales making the drama a major source of revenue for the tribe.

Despite the unexpected financial loss in 1996 the CHA Board of Trustees began 1997 upbeat. Board meeting minutes show that some felt that attendance was down the year prior due to the Atlanta Olympic Games. Although the Board was aware that, generally, attendance was down while costs remained high, “It is expected that business would show an increase over 1996” (CHA 1997, April 11). In retrospect this declaration seems unusual. Given that attendance trends have shown a steady decline over the past twenty-five years, what would be cause to assume that business will improve? Perhaps being too close to the drama is part of their problem, they have not noticed the incremental change over many years. Or perhaps management optimism stemmed from the fact that they are measuring their

success by how much cash they have on hand, rather than being concerned about shrinking annual revenue. At the annual membership meeting late that fall general manager Barry Hipps states, “the management is concerned about this decline and efforts are underway to increase marketing strategies and to plan for a 50th anniversary season celebration in 1999” (CHA 1997, November 13).

In 1998 the CHA made another poor business decision. A team of investment consultants convinced them to transfer \$500,000 of their cash reserves into a 40% bond, 60% stock portfolio. Subsequently, the Board moved against capital improvements because it decided reserve funds were in a too diminished state to be spent. Hindsight being what it is, this seems a poor decision given the dilapidated state of the theater facilities, which are detailed later in this chapter. In 1998 a committee to promote the 50th anniversary of the Drama was formed and a concerted effort to increase advertising for the following year was put in place.

The first evidence that the Board anticipated a deficit between expenses and revenue appears in 1999, two fiscal years into their decline of cash available. Preseason the Board minutes show that they expect that attendance will increase with the added advertising and emphasis on the 50th anniversary. Considerable effort is put into the commemoration, however attendance continues to decline. At mid-season, the minutes reflect the Board’s frustration, “It was agreed that the marketing initiatives in place were about all CHA could do at this time.” In the fall of 1999 Leon Jones succeeded Joyce Duggan as Principal Chief of the EBCI and Board Chairman Ed Henson felt it was time, “to discuss with him whether the Tribe might be in a position to loan funds to the Association” (CHA 1999, November 11). Although the Chief did not extend a line of credit to the CHA, they did not come away from

the meeting empty handed. Now sustained by gaming revenues, the EBCI moved to waive the CHA's obligation to pay tribal levy on its ticket sales.

Lacking the cash on hand to open its attractions in the spring of 2000, the CHA turned to a venerable local branch of First Citizen's Bank for a loan. First Citizen's provided an unsecured \$300,000 line of credit to the CHA, of which \$150,000 was used to open the season. The Association then repaid the full debt in the fall when the attractions closed. This pattern repeated itself until the fall of 2004 when \$200,000 is borrowed and left unpaid, leading to financial crisis. In 2000 ticket prices were raised but revenue continued to decline as Drama attendance fell again. Board and tribal member Jim Cooper, a well-known hotelier, offered his opinion that the casino was part of the problem because it was drawing the wrong type of customer to the reservation. Gamblers did not care for the cultural attractions and seldom left the casino anyways. However the EBCI's relation to gaming was set to change dramatically. "Chief Jones advised that in meetings with Governor Hunt, he had learned that the Governor would like to see the overall image of Cherokee improved, as well as see improvements in the presentation of Cherokee culture" (CHA 2000, April 7). As guardians of "the presentation of Cherokee culture," the CHA understood this upcoming amendment to the state gaming compact could be the life preserver they so desperately required.

In 2001 the Board continued to look for ways to trim its budget while increasing its revenues. When Board and tribal member Mary Jane Ferguson suggested that they suspend the policy of offering refunds and give rain checks instead general manager Hipps countered that people would be less likely to purchase tickets on days when it looked like rain if they thought they might not get their money back. Here the CHA minutes reflect not necessarily a lack of ideas but a lack of will to make major changes. As the situation worsens, the

possibility of a tribally funded bailout is alluded to. Ray Kinsland, a non-native officially recognized by act of Tribal Council as an honorary member of the EBCI, suggests the Tribe cannot allow the organization to fold, “due to the local interest in preservation of the Tribe’s history, and the fact that the CHA pioneered this interest and has certainly been the primary organization in promoting this preservation of history and culture” (CHA 2001, August 27).

With the new Cherokee Preservation Foundation finally open in 2002 optimism returned to the Board. The Foundation’s executive director, Dr. Susan Jenkins, an enrolled member of the Oklahoma Choctaw, met with the Board to discuss CHA operations and tour the facilities. “It was the consensus of the committee that CHA should seek a very significant amount of grant assistance from the Foundation,” especially for capital improvements and marketing funds (CHA 2002, March 12). Attendance that year made a modest 7% gain and Dr. Jenkins addressed the CHA membership at the annual meeting. She challenged the CHA “to think and ask where the Association would like to be in ten years” (CHA 2002, November 14a). Her words were prescient. The lack of any long-term vision for the future of the CHA would prove to be a decisive factor in its collapse.

At a 2002 meeting among a team of professional planners and designers, representatives of the Tribal government and the CHA Board, a search for a downtown master plan was begun. Jim Cooper again voiced his concern that, “not all businesses are benefiting from gaming.” He went on to note, “some of the community looks tired and worn and is not enticing to visitors” (CHA 2002, November 14b). Mary Jane Ferguson suggested, “CHA perhaps needs to enhance the Drama, perhaps reinvent ourselves and maybe go a step further... it might be a consideration to add to or redo the script... age may have taken its toll” (CHA 2002, November 14b). Tribal Council member Marie Junaluska noted, “The

Drama and the Village have gotten old to the tourists... nothing has changed about these attractions” (CHA 2002, November 14b). In a letter to the Board, Dr. Jenkins suggested that the CHA apply for a planning grant to re-write the Drama script. This amounted to considerable pressure on the Board to make changes from within its own ranks, from the Tribal Council, and from the Cherokee Preservation Foundation. These requests and warnings, however, did not prevent the organization’s collapse.

In 2003 ticket prices were raised again and the mood at CHA turned apprehensive. “It is unclear at this time what effect the weak economy, threat of war, and high gasoline prices may have on attendance” (CHA 2003, March 10). A \$300,000 grant from the CPF is used for improvements to stage lighting and props, however Dr. Jenkins continued to urge the CHA to think more broadly about its future. In a memo to the Board she advised them to “explore the possibility of presenting a second performance in conjunction with *Unto These Hills*” (CHA 2003, April 11). However, this suggestion was not met with enthusiasm, “It is the consensus of the members that the CHA would not wish to produce a second show” (CHA 2003, April 11). Dr. Jenkins continued to advocate broader change because it is the mission of the CPF to provide seed money for new ideas. Providing funds to cover basic operating expenses is outside its stated goals. As attendance at the Drama declined yet again general manager Hipps pointed to external factors outside of their control such as rain, increased competition in the tourist industry, the overall condition of the national economy, and the loss of manufacturing jobs in the southeast as driving forces shrinking their business. Poor showings at local attractions are not isolated the Board seemed to argue, but part of a slump across the entire region. While this is probably true, the implication here is that *Unto These Hills* declining revenue and rising costs are not a result of their management. External factors

aside, they remain confident in their Drama, “Trustees who have visited the Village and Drama this year are impressed with the quality of these productions” (CHA 2003, July 25). The Board’s undying loyalty to the Drama – a loyalty to what the Drama was, or how they remembered it to have been, rather than what the Drama was currently – was a major contributing factor to their inability to *comprehend* the scope and severity of the problems afflicting CHA, as well as inhibiting them from implementing radical changes. CHA’s situation was so profoundly precarious it may have been the Board was unable to see some aspects of it. Or perhaps they were in denial?

In 2004 a grant was made by the CPF for improvements to the auditorium’s rain shelter and to provide for microphone amplification for the actors. The CHA’s financial situation grows worse and Chairman Henson made plans to meet with newly elected Principal Chief Michell Hicks, a CPA and successful former corporate executive. The Board begins to ponder its final options: closing the Drama and only operating the Village; closing both the Drama and the Village and selling off its assets; or exploring the possibility of the Drama and Village becoming tribally owned and operated attractions. When the Board and the EBCI tribal government convened a special session to discuss a downtown master plan, the radical reservation-wide reforms recommended to properly “theme” family vacations in Cherokee forced Chairman Henson to admit CHA was in no place to take a leadership position. “CHA is ready to step aside... CHA has no money, but would be willing to cooperate. Perhaps CHA has become outdated” (CHA 2004, August 23). As their attractions close for the season the reserve funds are spent with the First Citizen’s loan still to be repaid. The CHA is essentially bankrupt and in the ensuing discussion it is suggested, “perhaps the Tribe would bail out CHA for one year” (CHA 2004, August 23). The CHA’s financial

situation has deteriorated to the point that they can no longer afford to cater the lunch at the annual membership meeting (CHA 2004, August 23).

At the September 2004 Board meeting Vice Chairman and tribal member Bob Blankenship announced he had received written notification of Chairman Ed Henson's resignation. Immediately the Board took steps to proceed with a resolution to Tribal Council. CHA assets will be used to secure an \$800,000 line of credit underwritten by the Tribe, while the Association's charter and bylaws will be rewritten so that the Board of Trustees is reduced to nine members: three are to be appointed directly by the Principal Chief, three others will be elected by the CHA membership, and those six will confer to appoint three more. Unanimously, the Tribal Council moved to underwrite the loan. The old Board retired and the new regime stepped forward. At their first meeting that winter, "It was noted that the above actions represent historical changes for the CHA... for the first time all trustees elected are members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians" (CHA 2004, November 12).

Why did the old regime not take more aggressive steps to preserve their stake in *Unto These Hills*? Did they foresee that the future demanded the Drama be reformed and collectively decided they wanted no part? Regardless, one is struck by the strange mixture of confidence combined with resignation with which they proceeded into bankruptcy. Although the CHA had ambitions for the future, it seems they had no long-term plans beyond doing in the next season what they had been able to do in the previous. Simultaneously, the old regime could not envision a future without *Unto These Hills* as it had always been. An organization rooted in another era politically, socially, and economically and with their leadership appointed to the Board for life it seems the CHA was unable even to perceive, much less comprehend, the radical changes of renaissance sweeping through the Tribe. As revenue

generated by Harrah's Cherokee Casino lifted the Tribe out of poverty, Cherokee political clout and ambition awoke in a world where the sun had set on CHA's influence.

“It was just a train wreck, start to finish”

When the Cherokee assumed management control of the CHA in late 2004 two things happened simultaneously. First, tribal members discovered just how badly the CHA organization and its facilities had decayed. From an organizational and infrastructural standpoint the entire operation was in crisis. Second, as the new management began to take radical steps to reverse the CHA's downward spiral they met with staunch resistance from non-Indians among the staff in the business office and among the performers and production staff in the theater.

Tribal member James Bradley was general manager of the CHA during this period of transition and had to confront major problems with communications and the office workspace. To him some of the practices of the old regime were downright bizarre.

Well right off the bat we didn't have a phone system with voice mail. So if people called and anybody was away from their desk or they were off hours, they just had to call back. Too bad for them, you know. All the communication was done by fax machine. There was no email, no network. The printer upstairs in the accounting office was a dot-matrix printer. The accounting software was the DOS version and even though they had updated the software to make it Windows friendly, they never used it. It was on our computer, they just wouldn't use it.

There used to be a huge [school bell] out here by this bookshelf... And when the phone rang it would go off so everybody upstairs could hear it. And it was just crazy and annoying. And one day Chelsea, it went off and we were in here talking about something, and she was like, “I can't stand that anymore!” And she just went over there and hooked the wires and just turned it off. It was crazy. Why do you need a fire alarm to go off (laughs) every time the phone rings?

What James describes here is a gulf separating the old CHA from what he considered to be typical twenty-first century business practices. For the Cherokee who worked in the office, the absence of internet and voice mail was evidence that the old regime was stuck in the past. This was meant figuratively, in the sense that they were unwilling to adopt new practices, and literally, in the sense that their office technology was too old to be functional.

I too encountered this persistent past as I waded through the massive CHA archive for my research. From January through September 2006, I was employed as the CHA archivist and endeavored to inventory the association's collection, bloated beyond belief by fifty-seven years of benign neglect. As a result of the archive's directionless growth, the CHA office building was stuffed with nearly six decades of junk and mementos, much like the attic or garage of a beloved grandparent. Some of these properties were outright trash and I aided the new regime in identifying documents and objects to destroy. As I write these words I know my academic colleagues will receive them skeptically. Shouldn't I know that one person's trash is another's treasure? After all, some archaeologists have built their careers dissecting middens! No, trust me, it was trash. Everywhere. We encountered the problem of junk almost every day. James Bradley described the situation:

There's just junk everywhere. It's the Historical Association but we don't need to keep credit card receipts from 1957. And, you know, the attendance information and the stuff that we need, numbers of people that were here – that stuff's difficult to find. That's not here.

In addition to the outrageous quantities of useless documents stored in the CHA's main office building there was a warehouse sized building in the backstage area known as the Folder Room, the sole purpose of which was to store junk. There was

obsolete lighting and sound equipment, palettes of unsold programs, boxes of discontinued souvenirs.

They were just sitting up there. And they would order things in bulk. Like, we have enough [purchase order] books to last us another fifty years. And they all say '19__' dash, so, you know, we have to cross that out.

There were items of historical significance mixed in with the trash, in my opinion enough to fill a museum solely dedicated to *Unto These Hills*. Often the difficulty lay not only in discerning which items were valuable and which were disposable, but physically accessing items that were hidden behind old lawnmowers, stacked on shelves eight feet high, left in the summer heat with the hornets and bees.

Although there were obstacles to be overcome simply in making the CHA office building up to date, the Mountainside Theater and its backstage facilities had fared the worst. John Tissue, a non-Indian with family ties to the area and considerable outdoor theater experience at Theater West Virginia, was brought in as theater manager in the transitional period before becoming general manager in 2007. He outlined the decay of the CHA's greatest asset.

In its pristine state or even in a slightly used state we have a great facility. But when the revenue started declining they just triaged buildings, they said, "We're only going to repair a building when that's the last resort. We're going to let it go until its crisis." And so all our buildings now are in a state of crisis because they just let them decline. From the stage steps to the concessions stands, to the cast housing, to the office and its infrastructure: phones, computers. All that stuff was either non-existent or decayed to a point where it was practically unusable.

Yona Wade, a tribal member and Master's student of Theater Arts Management at the North Carolina School of the Arts, elaborated on the plumbing situation, which was a major problem.

The basics that you need to operate safely and hygienically. The ratio of people to bathrooms, what we seat, maybe it was there at one point but it just wasn't updated. We just don't have the facilities available to service as many people adequately... But because those things haven't been done it's going to be a huge task to get it where we want it to be. And it's going to take time.

Working and performing in unsafe conditions with inadequate bathroom facilities were just a few of the problems that complicated Cherokee-led efforts to rewrite and re-present their history and culture through outdoor drama.

In addition to the poor state of the facilities, the new management and staff had to contend with out of date business practices, lack of information, and after the old regime left, a lack of institutional memory. During the 2006 season Yona Wade, who was at the CHA completing an internship for his degree from NCSA, was director of marketing and public relations. He related the difficulty of working in an environment with dated resources, brought all the more into relief by the state of the art training he was receiving from North Carolina's premier arts institute.

You come into a business that had no internet connection and everybody still has typewriters on their desk and its 2005. I can't do anything with that. I have file cabinets full downstairs of proofs that have been cut and pasted to be sent out for publication. This is not cut and paste on your computer. This is I've taken a picture and I have my background and I'm going to cut out some mountains and stick them on top of there. And then I'm going to cut out Tsali and his children and stick them in front of there. And send that out for a printing company or for a graphic designer to take and design after that. No. Those techniques are way, way gone. Way gone... I mean basically it's like a time warp.

Not only is the CHA in the business of representing the past, in a very real way the CHA exists in the past. Working in this environment for Yona is, "like a time warp," and he labors not only to accomplish his required duties but to pull the entire organization into the present.

With a head for business, John Tissue was primarily concerned with cutting costs and increasing revenue through skills in market research he had acquired managing corporate trade shows and product launches in Baltimore. He too was left in a lurch when he discovered that CHA was missing the standard market research he was accustomed to having. “From a business standpoint,” he said, “I was just blown away none of this research had never been done.”

Where people are coming from, what they were spending their money on, when in the season were they coming, how they were buying their tickets, they didn’t have any of that. They didn’t know what would sell in the gift shop.

Their form of demographic research was to send one of the parking guys into the parking lots to count the number of license plates from each state that they saw out there and that was the extent of their research.

In the place of basic market research, John encountered a hodge-podge of homegrown techniques like counting out of state license plates in the parking lots. As the office staff and I uncovered these elements of the old regime at the CHA, we would engage in a kind of post-mortem and theorize the demise of the old management. From the lack of market research, John concluded, “They felt that they knew who their customers were and what they wanted and were absolutely unwilling to grow a different type of customer.” This hypothesis is borne out by research I conducted at the Institute for Outdoor Drama in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. While I was exploring the files on *Unto These Hills* I found a substantial report on audience satisfaction conducted by the IOD in 2000. I was quite surprised to find it because there was nothing of the sort on file at the CHA archives. Scott Parker, then executive director for the IOD, was not surprised such data would be missing. The CHA management,

he told me, felt they knew their customers well enough and they took exception to anything that implied otherwise. Thus they likely paid little attention to the results of such a survey.

For James Bradley, as for many others, the material remainder of the old regime was evidence of its lack of planning.

Souvenir cups for the theater are just everywhere because they bought for the next five years. And at that point we didn't even know if the show was going to be here so why would you waste money? I know its less price per item, but why would you put that much money into cups when you don't even know if we're going to have a show?

In our office brainstorming sessions we would return to these persistent patterns of self-destructive behavior. At some point in the drama's successful past the CHA began buying items such as concession stand souvenir cups in large quantities. Over years, if not decades, this practice became reified taking on a life of its own. Then in the late 1990s and early 2000s when bankruptcy was looming and the CHA needed to cut costs it continued to reproduce the same patterns it had enacted in years past, even if that meant buying five years worth of soda cups when there was no guarantee the drama would open again.

The poor planning, the resistance to innovation and experimentation, the lack of adequate and relevant business information, all of this counter-productive behavior was perceived by the new regime as indicative of the old regime's ossified thinking and business practices. As John Tissue put it, "It looked to me like that they had over twenty years gotten into such a routine that they absolutely could not step outside of what they had done." This was in stark contrast to his experience in corporate theater in Baltimore where fierce competition meant that every variable was considered, every possible edge was utilized, "Things hadn't changed because there was nothing pushing the change. There were some

forces out there that should have been listened to, like the declining attendance numbers, but outside of that there was no innovation of any sort in any area of the drama.”

They were completely unwilling to take a look at any other ways of doing business. For example, they tried to sell new stuff in the gift shop. They refused to put it in the gift shop until somebody actually went up and made them put the new stuff in the gift shop that we'd bought. They were that against trying to institute something new. Another example of that is internet ticket sales. [They] were adamantly opposed to putting the new ticketing system in and said that, “Our clients don't have computers.” We know that this year we sold 20% of our 65,000 tickets on the internet. We know our internet traffic is significant.

According to the new management it was this reluctance to embrace new business practices and not the casino, bad weather, regional deindustrialization, and a national economic downturn following the attacks of September 11, 2001, that ultimately doomed the old regime. All of those elements may have played a factor, but the end result was seen as more or less inevitable given the stodginess of the old regime.

In addition to infrastructural problems there were organizational difficulties as well. At the close of the 2005 season the CHA was completely re-staffed, resulting in a gap in institutional memory. Whereas the old CHA had relied almost entirely on momentum and repetition to complete even the most basic tasks, that inertia was interrupted in 2006 creating unforeseen difficulties in the change of power. James Bradley described the issue, “My new staff had to learn where the files are, who do we pay bills to, where are the contract forms, when do we have auditions, how do we set up board meetings. All that day to day stuff.” I can speak to this from my own experience working in the CHA office. In addition to my official duties as archivist I did everything I could to help CHA be successful. Usually this meant answering the phones, watching the front while people went to lunch, and doing whatever odd job needed to be done. As the opening of the 2006 show approached and the

busy office reached a frenzied pitch I became assistant to the theater manager. From this position I was responsible for patching together the ramshackle backstage facilities, whenever some figurative fire broke out I was dispatched to put it out. One task concerned getting telephones for the male and female leads and the director. Telephone lines were already installed in the cast housing, but they were all disconnected and no one in the office knew how to get them turned back on. It took days negotiating with the phone company but I finally resolved the issue with our account and got the phones turned on. After I left the field to return to my home in Durham, North Carolina, the CHA office emailed me in the spring of 2007. They needed to get the phones turned on for the new cast, how had I managed to do that?

The Concretization of Bureaucratic Ideology

Just as Weber's "Iron Cage" (Weber 1992 [1930]) constrains thought and practice, not only does bureaucratic technique harden like concrete – sometimes it is concrete. John Tissue provides the exemplary story.

The classic example of this is that they built... the four apartments that are just below the director's A-frame. Whenever those were built, I'm not sure, probably the '60s I'm thinking... When they put in the cinderblock foundation and footers they put in the hot water heaters for the building and then built the building on top of it. And then built a door that was entirely too small to fit a hot water heater in or out of and there was no way from inside the apartments to replace those hot water heaters. And that just seems to sum up a whole lot of the way things were engineered and thought about and planned for. There was no attempt made to plan for replacing a hot water heater, which is a durable good but will always have to be replaced at some time... At that point the drama may have only been in existence twenty years, but here we are fifty-seven years later and we have four hot water heaters underneath the

house that we can't remove because (laughs, slaps table) we've had to replace them.

In our daily routines at the CHA office, often we would stumble upon similar relics, captured here by John's story of the trapped hot water heaters. These served as evidence in gossip sessions not only as to why the old regime fell, but why we were justified in taking its place.

Bureaucracy, Bad Behavior & Bad Blood

For the 2005 season the new CHA Board worked with the non-Indian office staff, stage performers, and production staff to produce the classic version of the drama one more time, but the organizational and infrastructural obstacles were too great. Even though there was a slight attendance increase in 2005, the non-Indian remnant of the old regime increasingly were seen as part of the problem and at the end of the 2005 season they were all fired *en masse*. This would prove to be a devastating move, rupturing the social bonds engendered between the Cherokee community and the non-Indian employees. Complicating this move were long standing, private resentments some Cherokees held against their non-Indian collaborators. Although the performers and production staff did not see themselves as in cahoots with the office staff – indeed, they often saw themselves as in opposition to the CHA office – for some Cherokees the two non-Indian groups were virtually synonymous. Taken together they were seen as colonizers, impostors, and insular with the office staff doling out employment and other resources to their allies while the production staff policed the composition of the predominantly non-Indian cast. In later years, the reputation of the theater backstage as a place of licentiousness also marred the theater itself in the eyes of conservative and Christian tribal members.

Two years after the dismissal resentment from non-Indians directed at the new CHA persisted. Emmett Furrow, however, returned to the drama in 2007 and in interview conveyed the attitudes of some of his closest friends who were still too angry to support the new show. Prior to the firing, during the 2005 season, the script was in the process of being tweaked and many in the non-Indian cast and production staff appreciated the need for that. But soon rumors began circulating, “We started hearing things about, ‘Well we want to make it totally Native. We want a Native American writer, director, choreographer, we don’t want anything that’s White on the staff.’ Which was, while understandable, still a slap in the face to people who had put in 20, 25 years.”

What ended up happening with the staff was they were all in kind of limbo. They knew a new director was being interviewed but I don’t think they realized how sweeping the changes would be. So towards the end of the summer they had all kind of gotten the feeling that they were going to be replaced, and then they started realizing, “Well they’re looking around at what it’s going to take technically to actually do the show. And they’re going to need us. They’re going to need a stage manager that understands that, they’re going to need lighting designers that understand this.” So Jimmy [Bradley] organized a lunch to talk with the staff. So they all went out together and they actually went over there thinking, “Okay, here comes the apology.”

There was no “apology” forthcoming. Instead everyone was put on notice that their replacements were coming. As Emmett puts it, “That’s when the tide turned up here. At that moment everything that was looking kind of positive but kind of weird and stuff suddenly turned into: we are being purged.”

One of our cast members did an open letter saying, “We’re getting shunted to the side. You people are getting ready to take over and do a show, maybe you don’t have what you need to do it.” He was a little angry. I think he tried to word it as well as he could. His anger still showed. But what happened from that was a backlash that suddenly we were racist because he was saying that, the interpretation was White people can do the show better than the Cherokee could. And suddenly friendships that had existed for years and years were shattered.

This made the conclusion of the 2005 season heartrendingly difficult for cast members as they came to realize they'd be forced to give up what was to them their second home. Some even saw their official farewell as only adding insult to injury.

Plus the Board threw together a tiny little tribute thing for the choreographer and the music director on that last night and it turned out to be more of an insult than anything else. It was supposed to be a, "We want to thank you," and they had a certificate that they had framed and stuff. And the certificate wasn't filled in and it was just computer printed and it had just been kind of thrown in the frame at the last second. And it was like, "We want to acknowledge you," but one of them kind of fell apart before he even got it off the stage. It was like, "Thank you very much, goodbye. No really, goodbye. Goodbye." And it left a lot of really bad feelings. And it left a huge cavity up here of knowledge of how do you put together this big show, in this place.

This indeed would pose a major problem to the new management as they brought in highly skilled and well regarded American Indian cast and production staff. Credentials notwithstanding, these theater experts had no experience in outdoor theater or working at the community level in a similar context.

After the non-Indian staff was fired their ill feelings seem to have caught the Cherokee management off guard. In interview two years after the fact, the Cherokee management looked back with more appreciation of how their actions were interpreted. Nevertheless, it was the consensus that starting over with a clean slate was absolutely necessary. As James Bradley put it, the hurt feelings were understandable to a certain extent but given the drama's dire situation it was imperative that radical steps be taken.

I don't want to speak for them, but I imagine that from their perspective somebody coming in and making these changes... they felt like it reflected badly on them as if they weren't doing their job or they weren't appreciated and their years of service wasn't appreciated. And that wasn't the case. It was just that CHA's dying and we have to take drastic measures to save it.

Really it was a business decision... and that's what I kept trying to tell them. If we don't do this, if we don't do something, this show is going to close and you're not going to be in Cherokee either way... Either we do a new show and we recast it, or the show closes for good. Do you want that? Do you want *Unto These Hills* to die that way? I don't. But, you know, they're artists and they're sensitive and they're emotional and all that stuff. So it was really difficult. It was really hard.

Indeed it was hard for James to even convey this information to me in interview, his words carefully parsed and slowly spoken with pregnant pauses and sighs. When James tells this story, he's telling the story of friends that he too has lost, of longstanding relationships that are no longer on speaking terms.

When it comes to the office staff, Chairman Lewis Harding described the tide as already turning against the non-Indians long before the Cherokee actually took over. He too felt his actions were justified given the bureaucratic resistance to change from the old regime.

When I was elected Chairman of the Board of Trustees there was already a strong sentiment, I didn't know it at the time, for replacement of existing leadership. Not just because of the fact that visitation and the revenue numbers were coming down, but just because of the entrenched, "That's the way things have always been and that's the way they will be," type approach.... Sometimes when we've done things in a certain way for such a long time we have blinders on. Our heels are dug into the dirt and it's just really, really difficult to change course

Maybe they can move in another direction? I tried and I tried and I tried. And it was just too entrenched. So I signed the termination letters and, you know, there's hard feelings now from those sweet people and I'm sorry about that. And time is a great healer, maybe in time that will heal up. I hope so because they're wonderful people... But somebody says, "Hey Louie, you've done a good job, there's the front door," it's still hard. But it needed to be done and I had to do it.

Other research participants also expressed regret and gave similar descriptions of the futile effort to bring the old office staff out of their reified mindset. But it seemed that the CHA

bureaucracy had taken on a life of its own and the employees that worked there were more or less beholden to its inertia and unable to imagine any alternative.

Like many board members Reuben Teesetuskie recognized the important personal commitments and institutional knowledge the old regime had access to and honestly desired their retention. As a former member of both the cast and crew whose family land abuts the theater, Reuben makes a careful distinction between the office staff and the theater staff.

Like I said, we offered the former administration, we gave them every chance to try and jump on board and help us with these changes because we felt like they could have been a real big part in helping us getting it back up on its feet. And they chose not to be. Why? I have no idea. That's between them... they evidently had no desire in changing because they had been there for twenty, thirty years, "We'd done this and we'd done that and its always done this way," but it was obvious it was failing. It was almost broke. So it was either close the door or revamp it... I had hoped to keep some of the former actors, some of the techs, some of the stage people with us. But they were let go... it happened and I guess that's water under the bridge.

Again the implication is that the non-Indians are stuck in the past, while the Cherokee are portrayed as forward thinking. Local explanations such as this invert long-standing stereotypes of American Indians as beholden to tradition and "backwards." In the midst of a new Cherokee Renaissance some locals explicitly reversed these rhetorical constructions onto the very population that had long denied them "temporal coevalness" (Fabian 1983).

Local explanations as to why the non-Indian staff was so reluctant to change often included references to their age and the longevity of their current work roles. Additionally, many Cherokees noted that non-Indians had excessive personal investments in the show that boiled over into possessiveness. As one person put it, "That it's their right to decide what's in that show and it's not ours, and they know more than we do." Among some Cherokees, pointing to non-Indian ownership in the Drama correlated the content of the old show and the

reluctance or failure of office staff to make necessary radical changes. From this perspective the old office staff did not want to effect major changes to the business operation because they were too invested in the kind of representation of Cherokees made by the classic show. That is to say some believed that among the office staff necessary changes within the CHA management *and* on the stage were incongruent with their perception of American Indians and what they can be.

According to James Bradley, any critique of the dance, music or storyline was interpreted by the non-Indian theater staff as an attack on the quality of their performances in the show.

And that's the point that I couldn't get across to the cast: this is not our story. None of this stuff actually happened and we have got to stop telling people that. It's not that the choreography wasn't good. It just wasn't Cherokee. It's not that the music wasn't good. It's that the music wasn't based in Cherokee. It's not that the dancers weren't talented enough to do the show. It's that the dances they were doing weren't based on Cherokee dances.

James, like many others, is reluctant to be overly critical of the non-Indians' reaction in interview because they had contributed their lives to the success of *Unto These Hills* (on other occasions, however, he would launch a spirited critique of the quality of their performance). However he feels the creative control of the show ultimately needed to rest with Cherokee.

Emmett Furrow described the process from a completely different angle. He shared the experiences of his partner, choreographer Pam Atha. He related her story to me, "She wanted to make the dances more authentic, she wanted elements from the real dances along with her background in modern dance."

But they wouldn't teach her what she needed to know, she couldn't find the access to finding out how to do it because they kept stonewalling her and telling her they didn't want the Native dances on stage because they were personal, spiritual, and weren't made for presentation. So the wall she kept running into disappeared when it became a Native choreographer. Suddenly, "Oh it's fine to do these dances now because we're the ones that are doing it. We just can't have a White person doing it." Which, again, I understand, but it's insurmountable. You can't tell somebody you want something and then not let them do it... she worked as hard as she could to make it into something else but they wouldn't let her.

Here we see how something that was frequently described as just a "business decision" produced unanticipated ill feelings also overlapped with narratives of the past and issues of indigenous self-representation.

The bad blood directed at the Cherokee management seems somehow even worse on the side of the production staff and performers because they were more closely associated with the backstage area of cast housing and rehearsal spaces. Geographically, the cast housing is isolated from the rest of the surrounding community, its entrance and exit laxly monitored to prohibit individuals not associated with the drama. Conflict between the community and the backstage are not new developments. Since the early 1950s the CHA has locked horns with the EBCI Tribal Council and the office of the Principal Chief over the behavior of its actors. Non-Indian drama performers have been an issue of social concern in the community since the inception of the drama. However in recent years, coinciding with the drama's direction by Peter Hardy, the reputation of the backstage for wild parties spread. Board member Reuben Teesetuskie qualified it as such, "[Its reputation was] real bad... And I worked security for years, since 1979 I've had my own security company. And I've seen things back up there that'd blow your mind."

Although not a conservative himself, James Bradley was deeply concerned about establishing an atmosphere that was safe and welcoming to Cherokees while engendering discipline and respect among the cast and crew. Nevertheless, he was especially harsh in his commentary relating how others perceived the backstage situation in the early 2000s.

A pit of sin: drinking and partying; out of control; drugs and alcohol free flowing. And anybody could just go back there and no matter what age you were you could have sex, you could get drugs, you could get alcohol. That kind of stuff, it was bad... People who had nothing to do with the show just showed up backstage for the parties on Saturday... It's a thousand wonders somebody didn't get killed or get into a fight, or somebody's parents show up with a gun... It was a place where Cherokees didn't feel welcome for the most part.

He was quick to defend the need for socialization among Cherokees and non-Indians, and among dancers, actors, and crew who during rehearsal seldom interact. This necessary task was accomplished under Bill Hardy, Peter Hardy's father and predecessor, with just three main parties. In the following story, James recounts an argument he had with an anonymous cast member about toning down the partying.

When I came back in 2000 there was a party every weekend. I mean, huge theme parties with sets and lights, costumes, that kind of stuff... It was crazy. And there was nobody back there in a leadership position saying, "You guys need to calm down. We want you to have a good time, but this is out of control."

So I was talking to them about that, "We need to go back to having those first three parties... But this is dangerous, somebody's going to get hurt, somebody's going to get in trouble... If a Cherokee kid comes up here and gets drunk and they're under twenty-one and they leave here and they wreck and die, or they wreck and kill somebody else, what do you think is going to happen back here? Ya'll going to be run out of town on a rail and they'll sue CHA. This is dangerous."

"Well you need to tell the Chief to put something in the paper and tell Cherokees not to come up here on Saturday nights."

And I said, “Are you serious?” You want me to call my Chief and tell him to tell our people not to go on a part of the reservation so White people can party and carry on and act like fools?

For James this was not only an issue of public safety, but part of a larger problem of non-Indian ownership of the play. “But that was the mindset. That made perfect sense to them, ‘Well the Cherokee are the problem. Just keep them away from up here?’ Uh, where are you? Whose land are you on? (laughs) Whose show are you supposed to be partaking in and portraying and showing respect to?”

The new Cherokee management wanted to effect a political change in taking over the CHA and they wanted to change the performance in terms of script and dance, but they also wanted to assert authority over the perceived unruliness of the backstage crew both in terms of safety and respect. This final move personalized the criticism of the performers and production staff, leading to more bad blood and hurt feelings. Emmett Furrow provides some context for the change of power with regards to the backstage scene from the non-Indian perspective. He sees the two issues as inherently distinct and remains puzzled why the two converged for the Cherokee management.

When Jimmy was officially made a general manager our understanding was they wanted to do a process of a rewrite. And for many years, being as so many were college students or college professors and stuff, had been exposed to sort of the P.C. idea of: well, what’s really right for the culture? Instead of: what should the White people see? So I think all of us were ready for a script change, we’d all been shaking our heads about that. The tradition is one thing, but why not take it out of 1950 and update it for the current audiences that are just more sophisticated?

But what I came back to, in 2005, was a general feeling that the reason the drama was in trouble was because we weren’t behaving well up here. And that, I’m confused by, honestly, I’m confused... We had locals who loved being up here and hanging with us and we loved having them here and hanging with us. We had local people come up here that we didn’t know and

sometimes those situations weren't as friendly... it was kind of an odd situation. It's their land. We wouldn't tell them to leave. But at the same time people would come up here with bad intentions. It was just, they knew there was liquor around and they wanted to be a part of it. So I could see wanting to cut back on that. There was a problem of people who were underage wanting to be involved up here which we couldn't have.

I know it sounds like we did nothing but party up here, but if we had one night out of the week where there was a party then that meant that there was six nights out of the week that there wasn't, and all the days. But suddenly that three or four hour period on Saturday night became more important to the community than anything else going on here.

There was a lack of cross-cultural communication between some in the Cherokee community and non-Indians in the backstage as to the best way to proceed with the re-writing process.

For the Cherokees there was a sense that the rewriting was just one aspect of a larger project that included totally remaking the theater. Totally remaking the theater was then but one aspect of remaking the entire reservation. The non-Indians, however, were uncertain about what was expected of them and what the plans would be.

Mechanized Theater

The bureaucraticization of the CHA was at once a secret to its success and cause of its downfall. In a previous vignette I characterized office practices as "concretization," but Emmett Furrow offered a different metaphor from the perspective of the theater. Emmett had a unique perspective because he had performed under Bill Hardy in the Drama's autumn years in the 1980s when attendance was down but morale was still high. He saw the catastrophic drop off in attendance in the late 1990s and early 2000s, left with the old cast at the end of 2005 but then chose to return in 2007 when the second *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* premiered. In the mid 1980s, as a novice arriving at Mountainside Theater what

impressed him most was that the show had already established “a serious tradition” backstage. “That the show is here, the show is established, you are now a part of this big thing.”

EF: And once we actually got that machine rolling and got into the process of doing the show, just recognizing that I was surrounded by people who loved what they did and worked as hard as they could to make it happen. And it’s hard not to get seduced by it, and fall right in, and do everything you can because everybody around you is doing what they can.

MT: Why do you keep calling it the Machine? What is the Machine?

EF: Well that just came up to me this year because I’d never thought of it that way before. We put this show together in two and a half weeks. Now the show we’re doing right now, its five and a half weeks of rehearsal.

So I guess I call it the Machine because now when it’s a new show and we’ve got a lot of people that just have that deer in the headlights look and they’re not sure what’s going to happen and when it needs to happen. That we can’t get that kind of drive and rhythm... And that’s when it hit me —the old show was a Machine.

When our conversation veered into a discussion of the importance of institutional memory, Emmett made an analogy to Ardastra Gardens in Nassau, Bahamas, where they have a flock of marching flamingos. “Some guy back in the twenties trained flamingos to march. Nobody knows how he did it and nobody’s been able to repeat it.” But once the animals were trained, “all they had to do from that point on was just let the new flamingos learn it.” As chicks were raised in the flock they adopted the behavior of the adults. Today the show at Ardastra Gardens continues Emmett says, “none of those flamingos met the original trainer, but they all do the same show.”

It’s kind of the same thing up here. We had as much as a sixty percent return rate, which is unheard of in outdoor drama... at least half on any given year already knew their jobs and the other people around only had to step into slots and they were being directed by the director but also by all the people around

them going, “No, you just scoot down over that way. No, you’ll do it on this line.”

As the Cherokee management struggled to garner the greatest degree of empowerment through self-representation they were met with many obstacles in the office and on the stage. Ironically, the new CHA would have benefited from some of the bureaucratic elements of the old CHA in terms of knowledge and backstage practice, or “tradition” as Emmett calls it. However it’s was the ossification of office practices, made manifest in everything from building structures with trapped water heaters to excessive plastic drink cups purchased while on the brink of bankruptcy, that prevented the old regime from saving itself. Given that the context of the change of power at the CHA is one of a larger, reservation-wide Renaissance, it seems possible that the old regime did not want to save itself. That a social world that demanded radical change in *Unto These Hills* was not one in which they wanted to participate, the Machine was disassembled, all that remained were its old and worn out parts.

The “Spirit of History”: Rereading *Unto These Hills*

In many cases we try to tie the local history to something nationally to give it impact. We are magnifying the local heroes to make them into national figures.

Kermit Hunter (Hayes 1982:66)

No matter what you write about American history or about people, you are writing about America. The background theme is America.

Kermit Hunter (Hayes 1982:48)

Throughout his career as a playwright Kermit Hunter was dogged by historians, from hobbyists to professionals, who took issue with this or that detail of his historical outdoor dramas, of which he wrote forty. For example at the debut of *Unto These Hills* a major issue was, ironically, his unsympathetic portrayal of Andrew Jackson. Raymond Carroll Hayes in his dissertation on Hunter writes, “Even the Governor of Tennessee wrote the Governor of North Carolina calling the play a ‘travesty on American history’ and insisting that something be done to remove the blight or discourage dramatization of the play. When confronted with this sensitive problem, Hunter clearly but firmly pointed out that he was writing creative drama, not history lessons” (1982:61).¹ Instead Hunter made overtures to what he called the “spirit of history.”

We strive never to create a wrong impression of history, or deliberately to falsify or discolor an incident or a period merely for the sake of good drama.²

¹ Citation for this in Hayes is Hunter, Kermit. “History or Drama?” South Atlantic Bulletin, May 1953, p3.

² Citation for this in Hayes is Hunter, Kermit. “Some Aspects of Outdoor Historical Drama, with Special Reference to ‘Unto These Hills.’” The East Tennessee Historical Society Publications. Knoxville: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1954.

If it is the case that Hunter wishes not to falsify history and that his historical critics can be dismissed as “zealots” (Hayes 1982:61), by what means does the playwright determine which facts to ignore and which to adhere to? In place of factual history, Hunter imagines his plays to deliver “fundamental and timeless truths”³ and a “universal sense of human brotherhood and human understanding.”⁴

Wallace Umberger in his dissertation on the Cherokee Historical Association draws from an interview with Sam Seldon, Hunter’s mentor at UNC, when he writes that, “Despite the careful advise of the [UNC] Playmakers’ staff, the script which subsequently was read at Cherokee fell under the harsh criticism of local residents still concerned about the liberties which Hunter was taking with historical fact. Seldon argued valiantly for him that it was the spirit of the truth Hunter was trying to capture, not the literal truth” (Umberger 1970:45). Unfortunately I was unable to locate anyone who had memory of this event nor are there any written records showing this degree of Cherokee agency in influencing, or attempting to influence, the scope and details of the drama’s script. Thus it remains unknown which Cherokee provided feedback, what their specific concerns were, and the extent to which those concerns were incorporated or rejected. The excerpt from Umberger does indicate how theater professionals attempted to persuade Cherokee to accept a commercialized interpretation of their history: by making recourse to universalizing themes conveyed best by the Spirit of History, rather than dull facts.

* * *

³ Citation for this in Hayes is Hunter, Kermit. “The Outdoor Historical Drama.” *The North Carolina Historical Review*, 30(2), April 1953, p.220.

⁴ Citation for this in Hayes is Hunter, Kermit. “The Theater Meets the People.” *Educational Theatre Journal*, May 1955, p.135.

With the fall of the CHA's old regime in 2004 the new management intended to change the drama slowly, tweaking the performance here and there until it was an "accurate" representation of their tribe's culture and history. Working through this paradigm of incremental changes resulted in the 2005 performance, a slightly altered form of the classic show where, for example, the Indian characters no longer spoke in the third person. However the Board of Trustees and management, frustrated with the process of making corrections and disappointed in consistently low attendance figures, decided to scrap the old show and pursue an entirely new script. Responding to feedback from the Museum of the Cherokee Indian most people within the CHA felt that the classic drama "was too broken to be fixed," that it was best to start over with a clean slate. This would prove to be a highly problematic move, as I will show in later chapters, for there was little consensus within the Cherokee community of how to improve the script or even if it was the drama's most pressing shortcoming.

But what was the classic *Unto These Hills* on stage and on the page? What was the scope of this problem too broken to be fixed? In the main body of this chapter I focus on the script of the classic *Unto These Hills* focusing on the many misrepresentations of Cherokee culture and history it showcased. In particular I am interested in forwarding the argument that the drama served to compose an imagined White American nationalist subjectivity for its tourist audience. That is to say that the many historical errors of the drama, divergent though they may be, are related to one another in a patterned way as they intersect in American nationalism. The transformation of this aspect of the drama's "message" or "mission," as some call it, would become one of the most provocative moves by the Cherokee management in antagonizing their legacy costumers.

In order to frame this discussion of the script I begin with an orientation to the outdoor drama art form by briefly describing some of its self-professed ideological and material distinctions from indoor theater. I conclude my discussion of the drama's script by engaging the ongoing debate initiated even before the drama's debut about Kermit Hunter's decisions to manipulate the presentation of Cherokee history and the many defenses of those actions he and his allies deployed, including the supposed merits of outdoor drama for its host community. Finally I characterize the performance of the classic *Unto These Hills* in terms of whiteness and American nationalism. In future chapters I will show how these two social constructions, rather than historical inaccuracies, would become the major foil for rewriting the script in 2006 and subsequent productions of the all new *Unto These Hills... a Retelling*.

Outdoor Drama and Difference

The United States is a spacious land. People think big. The outdoor drama can exploit space. Characters can run, leap, move freely without fear of running into walls.

Raymond Carroll Hayes (1982:25)

As Hayes shows in his dissertation on Kermit Hunter's oeuvre, both technically and thematically outdoor dramas differ from indoor dramas. In this section I will briefly outline how the outdoor drama distinguishes itself from indoor theater in terms of the scale of performance, the affective impact of the surrounding natural environment, and the audience it attracts.

The ideals of outdoor drama are rooted in its immediate predecessor, American pageantry. Shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, American popular culture was

swept by a populist and nationalist outdoor theater project or “Pageantry Movement,” lasting from about 1905-1925 (Prevots 1990). One such pageant, *Ramona*, first staged in Hemet, California, in 1923 is still in production. This nationalist art form was a development of the reform movements of the Progressive era, seeking to promote enlightened democracy and to heal the nation imagined to be injured by the wounds of urbanism, modernity, and the failure of non-White peoples to assimilate into the dominant society. Such pageants usually took place outdoors, often the site of the pageant was symbolic to the content of the performance, and typically audiences were in the thousands. Pageantry had an important role in shaping American theater, in particular by establishing the stylistic conventions and infrastructural networks that would become “outdoor drama.” On the east coast the first outdoor drama was *The Lost Colony* first produced in 1937 in Manteo, North Carolina. As was shown in chapter two, *The Lost Colony* was one of the inspirations for *Unto These Hills* and it too utilized many of the same resources made available by the University of North Carolina.

Everything is bigger outdoors. Outdoor stages tend to be large enough to permit the performance of spectacular crowds and action scenes. All dramatic elements are on a larger scale too, with opportunities to fill the stage with mass movements of bodies such as in Scene 12 of *Unto These Hills* – the Removal of the Cherokee Nation along the Trail of Tears. Complementing the scale of the stage are the epic proportions of the script itself, which in *Unto These Hills* aims to capture nothing less than the birth of the American nation via the dispossession of native people. Here the American and Cherokee nations collectively are like characters and the story of history, though enacted by individuals, is really about the group. According to Hayes, Umberger, and other advocates of this art form *Unto These Hills* may best be described as an epic-drama because unlike pageants, which are generally considered

to be more thematically driven, it has a coherent plot and developed characters. Unlike indoor theater, outdoor drama cannot portray intimate details and tends to focus more on action than talking. This is usually not detrimental to the reception of the play's story because outdoor dramas typically deal with subject matters the audience is already generally familiar with. In the case of *Unto These Hills* where the history and culture of a non-Western people is being portrayed for a largely White American audience it has been necessary to make concessions in terms of how much of the "other" culture is shown.

Moreover, the audience and cast alike are subject to the natural elements including but not limited to pesky insects, heat and cold, or drizzling rain. The natural setting of the play – the breeze, the frog songs, the scent of the forest, the moon and stars at night – serves to contextualize the content of the play while evoking in the minds of its audience a mythical American landscape, the Purple Mountains Majesty if you will. The landscape is a performer too stressing the importance of the North American land to American nationalist stories. Like the Pageantry Movement that preceded it, *Unto These Hills* is no exception in its celebration of the surrounding locale. The physical setting of the theater in the Great Smokies makes the drama more than a mere play. Ideally, the audience will feel that they are in the place where the onstage actions occurred. The use of locals in the cast and historic setting of the theater on Indian land combine such that some tourists chose to label the drama a "reenactment."

Finally there are class distinctions between outdoor and indoor dramas in terms of the audiences they draw. Outdoor drama, like its populist and progressive era born ancestor the Pageantry Movement, is imagined to be "of the people." It is social, communal, and national. By contrast indoor drama seems the domain of elites and carries with it class expectations of dress and behavior. Outdoor drama attracts casually dressed "blue collar" families with

children who can be expected to be noisy and talkative during the performance. By contrast indoor dramas cater almost exclusively to adults and if children attend they are expected to be silent and act proper. As Hayes (1982:24-25) argues, “Many Americans are unsophisticated people who demand unsophisticated entertainment,”

People simply feel closer to God and country when they can join a group of their like-minded fellow citizens in America’s own outdoors, proudly watching an inspiring drama about their nation’s past.

Outdoor drama has now become a dated art form and across the country attendance at outdoor dramas is in decline. When *Unto These Hills* opened in 1950 it was the only game in town. There was no television, tourists had little to entertain them in their hotel rooms and so the drama had cornered the market on evening entertainment. Today, however, tourists do not feel compelled to be entertained by a single play when their individual tastes can be catered to by cable television provided by their hotels. Besides there is always Harrah’s Cherokee Casino, open twenty-four hours a day. Thus mass social changes in taste, concurrent technological innovations, and political developments have contributed to *Unto These Hills* declining attendance.

Rereading *Unto These Hills*

The objective of this section is to familiarize the reader with *Unto These Hills*. It is based on my having seen the play performed in 2005 and viewing a DVD production of the 2003 performance. Colloquially, it is not uncommon to hear Cherokee, non-Indian locals, or even former cast members comment on how little the drama changed during its fifty-six year run. In fact the drama was constantly changing, though rarely in terms that challenged its

version of Cherokee history and culture. One of the most profound changes was to the musical accompaniment, which from its debut up to the early 1980s was performed entirely by organ, lending the patina of a 1950s soap opera. Under the creative supervision of McCray Hardy a symphonic score was composed and performed by the North Carolina Symphony orchestra. A digital recording of this musical performance was then played back during performance, making the sounds of the drama more like a cinematic soundtrack. In a similar vein choreographer Pam Atha also transformed the drama's dances to complement the new music. In its heyday *Unto These Hills* had a substantially longer running time than it did when it closed, many scenes were trimmed and lines cut over the years. Given that the drama was in production for so long it is impossible to track all the changes, nor is that my objective. What I will focus on here are the liberties taken with Cherokee history and culture, in particular those that I argue promote American nationalism by means of appeals to a hegemonic universalism.

Pre-show

If you've parked your car at the bottom of the hill in the rear of the Museum of the Cherokee Indian or the Qualla Arts and Crafts Co-op and have no interest in hiking the steep trail up the mountain to the theater entrance then look to the men directing people into the big yellow Cherokee Boys Club school buses. Once the idling school bus is mostly full you are on your way up the winding road to the top of the hill where the Mountainside Theater stands facing an old cemetery at the hill's crest only a few paces away. If you have not already picked up your ticket at the main office during the morning or afternoon then there is a box office right here. Inside the gate you will find an usher who can direct you to your seat. The house is

currently divided into two sections, general admission seating near the top and reserved seating closest to the stage, although the division and pricing for the seats have had countless permutations over time. Be careful of the steep steps as you clamber down the stone staircase to your plastic bucket seat.

The pre-show entertainment at *Unto These Hills* has always been variable but usually entails a choir, sometimes accompanied by musicians, singing folk, gospel, and mountain songs. The concession stands are open and selling popcorn and Pepsi, people mill about. The altitude of the Appalachians keeps most of the day's mosquitoes at bay and invites a cooling breeze in the evening. It is a good night, the house fills in quickly and soon the choir retires. The soundtrack starts to play over the speakers. The show is about to begin.

Scene 1 – A “primitive” dance is interrupted by Hernando de Soto and his soldiers. He has captive an Indian “queen” who speaks to the Cherokee for him. He threatens the Cherokee and demands gold. The Cherokee chief tells him to journey west.

The drama begins before the sun has set so lighting effects are not implemented early in act one. Over the theater's sound system a male narrator intones, “In the beginning was the land,” an allusion to the opening lines of the Book of Genesis and casting the pre-Columbian Cherokee who dance onto stage as representative of an unspoiled Eden. The audience is treated to a lighthearted “primitive” dance. The music is sweeping, cinematic, evoking the landscape of the Great Smokies as much as the soundtrack of a Hollywood western might evoke the windy expanse of the Great Plains.

As the dance continues the narrator describes the ideal qualities of the people who inhabit this place culminating with another invocation of God, “Here the Great Spirit, that

divine force which stirred the hearts of all men, which led them to express in primitive ritual their deep kinship with the eternal God.” Through the phrase “all men” and the notion that Indians had some primordial insight into a monotheistic God even prior to the arrival of missionaries, the audience is becoming acclimated to Hunter’s universalism. Universalism will work triple duty here by allowing: the non-Indian tourists to identify with the Cherokee; diffusing apprehensions a predominantly Southern Christian audience might have to witnessing dances cast “as if” primitive, i.e. pagan, ritual; and tying the Removal of the Cherokee Nation to social issues contemporary to the United States.

This peaceful and reverent dance is interrupted by a scream and the raucous entrance of Hernando de Soto from far stage right his soldiers singing in Spanish as they march. De Soto threatens the Cherokee and demands gold. In their first encounter with the Whiteman the charm of Eden is broken. De Soto has with him a captive Indian “queen,” a title Hunter borrowed from Mooney (1992:23) who speaks for him to the Cherokee, “We come in peace,” she announces to the astonished tribe. These are the first words spoken by a character on stage and the moment is doubly important for the audience’s identification with the Cherokee: the Indian characters converse on stage in English while De Soto’s status as an interloper is marked by speaking Spanish. This dovetails nicely with longstanding American cultural practices of substituting any Native presence with whiteness here by proxy through language. Viewed in 2005 with White actors dressed as Indians speaking English in opposition to Spanish speakers evoked, to my mind at least, contemporary American nationalist fears about foreigners, especially Mexican immigration. Others in the audience may not have been so moved as one night I heard, upon De Soto’s entrance, applause, whistles, and *un grito* from a party seated behind me.

The narrator speaks in the transition to Scene 2, “Two hundred and fifty years passed by...” *Unto These Hills* makes this particular historical move of skipping through centuries as though nothing of consequence occurred because James Mooney’s “Historical Sketch of the Cherokee,” one of the primary sources of information Hunter had at his disposal when writing the script, does something similar.

Scene 2 – *Tecumseh visits the Cherokee to bid them to join in his war against the Americans. Tecumseh first insults John Ross for being White and then Drowning Bear by pledging to align with the British. White Path wants to join Tecumseh, but Junaluska summons Sequoyah to speak. Sequoyah delivers a speech praising Whitemen, Tecumseh leaves in anger.*

In the transition to Scene 2 the narrator continues, “The White man kept coming. Good met with good; evil with evil.” It is not that colonization of America was inherently bad, Hunter seems to say, but that inevitably some bad people were involved with it. This is typical of American individualism which obscures the agency of institutions, social structures and groups while privileging the actions of individual people – as if society were made up of millions of tiny, disarticulated particles going about their own business of Brownian motion. This is also a critical dramatic device in that it allows the audience to identify with the “good” as opposed to the “bad” Whites while naturalizing colonization as inevitable; two narrative devices that double as ideological practices for rationalizing conquest.

It is not surprising that Hunter, writing in 1948, would deploy “Man” to stand in for the human. As when the narrator intones, “The Cherokee tried to keep peace... they had learned that no matter what a man’s race or color might be, it is far better to live with him in friendliness...” On the one hand this masculinist language combines with character

development and other dramatic devices to cast men's role in history as very different from those of women as will be shown in Scenes 4 and 9. On the other hand this masculine universal serves to compose a multiculturalism that, critical though we may be of it today, was progressive for its time and must have struck its earliest audiences, pre-*Brown v. Board of Education*, as somewhat radical. I will argue in a later chapter that audience nostalgia for the classic show is based partially on nostalgia for an American past when such multicultural "melting pot" ideologies seemed more plausible. Like their knowledge of God and land, the Cherokee are again portrayed as if having access to some kind of essential wisdom, which here speaks to the racial conflicts of the United States in the middle-twentieth century that were contemporary with the drama's debut.

The narrator explicitly dates Scene 2 declaring it to be 1811, "England again threatened the young continent," poetically substituting the land for the American nation as if war could be made on the trees and mountains too. This move echoes narrative practices, dating back to the early colonial era, of using Indians to represent the land and nature. White desire to identify with North America as opposed to Europe is one of the driving motivations behind cultural practices of White identification with Indians, or what Philip Deloria (1998) has termed "Playing Indian."

At this evocation of war with England Tecumseh appears before a gathering of Cherokee chiefs – all of whom spoke in the third person, 1950-2004. Tecumseh has voyaged south to persuade the Cherokee to join in his alliance against the Americans to prevent their expansion west. He addresses a council of chiefs, represented as all male though in the early nineteenth century Cherokee women would have retained considerable formal political power (Perdue 1998). There are a number of odd figments of history in this scene, which

Hayes refers to as “telescoping” (1982:117). Essentially Hunter has taken a group of historical figures who never could have met one another and put them all together in the same place at the same time for reasons of dramaturgical expediency. In doing so Hunter seems to be communicating to the audience that Cherokee, North Carolina, rather than north Georgia and Alabama was once the seat of the Cherokee nation and ground zero for all the grand historic events unfolding in the drama. While Tecumseh did meet with the Cherokee there is no direct evidence that he passed through North Carolina or met any of the historical figures on stage. Additionally Junaluska is portrayed as a principal chief to the other Cherokee, though there was nothing like a principal chief among the Cherokee at this time, their nation being comprised of autonomous townships. He is even elevated above Drowning Bear who was chief of the local Oconaluftee Cherokee at the time.

Tecumseh takes exception to the presence of John Ross, a titan of Cherokee history but a comparatively minor character in the drama, because of his whiteness. Junaluska defends Ross and his role in the Cherokee Nation. I argue that this and other scenes to follow make sly allusion to the fact that many Whites claim Cherokee ancestry and serves to validate such claims.

Drowning Bear, a companion to Junaluska, is also introduced in this scene. He bristles at Tecumseh’s threat to align with the British against the Americans, “My father fought on the side of General Washington!” In reality there was little consensus among Cherokee during the Revolutionary War and some were aligned with the dissident Dragging Canoe and his Chickamauga faction against the Americans as a result of eighteenth century British punitive expeditions (Hatley 1995). From a narrative standpoint the idea of Cherokee military alliance with the United States serves to solidify audience identification with the

Cherokee and places Cherokee history within a discourse of American nation building. That is, the actions of the Cherokee tribe are portrayed as part of a greater effort in creating the United States. Cherokees' love for the American nation is then used to build a case for representing Andrew Jackson as a traitor to American ideals of equality, another historical interpretation that seems pedestrian today but was quite contentious at the drama's debut. In representing the Cherokee as true believers in America, their abuse at the hands of the United States government is brought into further relief.

When White Path, a younger Cherokee chief, declares his hatred for the Whiteman, Junaluska summons Sequoyah to speak, introducing him by reference to his work on the syllabary and its usefulness in writing a Cherokee constitution. However Sequoyah, who then resided in what is today Alabama, was still an unknown in 1811, his syllabary incomplete until 1821, and there was no Cherokee Constitution until 1827. Sequoyah's character walks with a cane though he was not an elder at this time, but perhaps it is there as a symbol of his wisdom. Genius though he may be Sequoyah is still an Indian and he spoke in the third person like all the other Indian characters. Sequoyah queries Tecumseh about his planned war with the Whites, what weaponry he has available and what he thinks will happen to the land should the British defeat the Americans. This bit of Socratic method is meant to make Tecumseh look foolish, but Sequoyah's third and final question veers back to American nationalism.

His character speaks, "Years ago we lived in caves and grass huts, now we build warm houses. Many times we starved through the long winters, now we plant big fields of corn and potatoes and store them in barns for the winter. Our fathers prayed to the spirits of

these mountains, now we go to church and worship a Christian God. Where did the Redman learn these things?”

Here the indigenous encounter with the colonizer is portrayed as one of unproblematic progress and the Cherokee (represented by their beloved genius) are made to seem the wiser for having adopted western practices. This dovetails nicely with audience expectations, as if colonization was some kind of trade of land for modernity. Hunter’s three examples of progress – housing, agriculture, and religion – are themselves open to greater scrutiny. In particular the agricultural example, that Cherokee obtained corn and potatoes from Whites, is bizarre given that both those vegetables are New World crops domesticated by Native people. It was the Indians who taught the Whites to farm in the seaboard colonies where the soil and climate were completely foreign to the Europeans. The notion that American Indian tribes were all hunter-gatherers ignorant of agriculture is a myth that rests primarily in non-Indian imaginations. The reference to widespread Cherokee Christianity also ought to be qualified. While it is true that in the modern era Cherokee are staunchly Christian, heavily favoring Baptist and Methodist churches, the tribe as a whole did not make a mass conversion until around the time of Removal, or more than twenty-five years after the date of this scene (McLoughlin 1990).

Tecumseh the firebrand has his rebuttal, “Tell me, where are the tribes of our people? They vanish before the Whiteman as snow before the summer sun,” a line based on a quotation historically attributed to Dragging Canoe, a Cherokee that lead military strikes against the Americans. As it is used here it becomes reminiscent of the trope of the vanishing Indian, well-worn in frontier literature and is also part of American nationalist ideologies in shifting blame for Native dispossession from federal policy to the Indians themselves in

terms of their “destiny” or “fate.” From the audience’s point of view this metaphor would have been recognizable as a common theme of grade school history textbooks and Hollywood westerns.

In the end Sequoyah gets credit for establishing a peace policy between the Cherokee and the United States. He gets in the last word too, with a phrase that will be echoed again in the Scene 11, “It is not that a man’s skin is black, or red, or white. Some men are good, some men are evil. A good man labors for peace.” However such a statement is inverted by the Cherokee practice of slavery and plantation holding among tribal elites (Perdue 1979). While it is true that there was no aboriginal notion of race among American Indians at the time of contact, Indians learned European racism and how it could be manipulated in their favor including the exploitation of African slaves (Perdue 2003). Sequoyah continues, “We’re not just Redmen. We’re all Americans.” Again, the dramatic function of portraying the Cherokee as peace loving multiculturalists is to cast Removal as an act of betrayal of American ideals of equality. Ideologically these narrative forms utilize the Cherokee story as part of a greater American story, here having Cherokee characters proclaim their identification with the idealized American melting pot.

Scene 3 – *The audience is introduced to Tsali who joins the Cherokee warriors as they unite with the American military against the Creek in the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. During an elaborate fight sequence Sam Houston acts as an intermediary between the Cherokee and U.S. military, and in a climactic battle Junaluska saves General Andrew Jackson’s life.*

Because the focal point of the play is the United States, its needs are often emphasized over those more relevant to Cherokee people. This is seen in the narrator's transition to Scene 3, "And suddenly, the Whiteman called on the Cherokee for help. Help against these other Indians who threatened the young American nation." The music is swelling and cinematic as the audience is introduced to Tsali, the doomed martyr of the Eastern Cherokee, and a harp lilts romantically as his pregnant bride enters bearing his rifle. When Tsali leaves his homeland for the battlefield, *Unto These Hills* again draws on the power of tropes that date back to the colonial era associating Indians, war, American nationalism, and the prowess of the United States military. Hunter, himself an army veteran, wrote the play in the late 1940s at the dawn of a new era of American geopolitical power. As I will show, Hunter tends toward portraying the institution of the U.S. military and its interactions with Indians in a positive light, any negative outcomes of that relationship stem from the actions of misguided individuals or else are the result of orders handed down by crooked politicians.

Hunter's portrayal of the U.S. military speaks to the audience in a very personal way because, as tourist destinations, Cherokee and the Smoky Mountains appeal primarily to domestic middle and working class families – precisely the demographic most likely to have provided military service. On one occasion while I was in the audience, during the pre-show entertainment veterans were asked to rise and were applauded. *Unto These Hills* is not the only site in Cherokee, North Carolina, where something like that might happen. Many souvenir shops around town have available for purchase commodities that display military iconography such as black and white POW/MIA or 9/11 themed flags, t-shirts, patches, and stickers. Some Cherokees I interviewed explained this catering to a military audience in

terms of Indian veneration of the warrior. Among contemporary Cherokee enlistment in the military is generally considered a noble pursuit that can yield local prestige and honor.

The dramatic function of this trope for *Unto These Hills* is to play off military sympathies in the audience and evoke an emotional response that personalizes the drama's narrative: I, or one of my family members, have a relationship with the military; the military has a direct historical relationship to Indians; therefore I have a relationship with Indians too. Contemporary wars are often represented as symbolic and ideological re-enactments of past wars with a fundamental footing in the eastern and western Indian wars of the nineteenth century. Over the course of its stage run, *Unto These Hills* and the marshalism it evokes would have echoed historic audience concerns about war, the place of war in American society, and America's role in the world. Thus, I am proposing that audiences in the 1950s and 1960s could have read the military conflict in *Unto These Hills* through the lens of World War II. Audiences in the 1970s and 1980s could have read the drama through the lens of Vietnam, and so on. In terms of audience identification with the Cherokee, the characters' relationship to war mirrors the audience members' own experience. Those desires and fears, family members waiting at home for the soldiers to return, are recognizable. But at the same time they are embedded in long-standing symbolic relationships wedding American nationalism, military might, and Indians.

Scene 3 is primarily concerned with the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, in which the Cherokee used the U.S. military to rout their ancient rivals the Creek in what Mooney refers to as a "massacre" (1992:93). In his *Sketch* Mooney writes that General Jackson's military force was dwindling as he was plagued by desertion from some while other soldiers chose to quit when their contracts expired. About 1,000 Cherokee warriors were brought on to make

up for the missing soldiers, but the tribe's motivation in participating in this campaign is not known in any definite sense. It could have been a combination of wanting to appease their more powerful neighbor the United States while simultaneously punishing the enemy Creek, but it probably was not a patriotic strike against the British in defense of America as the drama implies. From a Cherokee perspective combat with the Creek might be set within the context of ongoing raids and aggression between the two tribes, but *Unto These Hills* casts it as one part of the War of 1812. Again Cherokee history is used as if it were a chapter in a greater American history and it further solidifies the historical misperception that the Cherokee are always aligned with Americans against the foreigners.

Sam Houston, wearing a coonskin cap, makes an appearance as a White Cherokee. Houston, in folk tales and biographies, is often represented as an "adopted" Cherokee, other accounts will make reference to him having been "raised" by Cherokee, or having married a Cherokee. As a narrative device, Sam Houston is a recognizable American historical figure that audiences will know and be familiar with more so than Junaluska or Drowning Bear. His presence as a White who is accepted by the Cherokee reinforces preconceptions that may be held by some audience members that they too can be both White and Cherokee. When the action lulls and there is debate among General Jackson, Houston, Junaluska, Drowning Bear, and Tsali. We see Jackson and Junaluska conferring, reinforcing the impression that Junaluska is "in charge" of the Cherokee. As the battle resumes the soundtrack becomes cinematic and fast paced conveying the action of the scene. In the climax Junaluska saves Jackson's life and they exchange a symbolic handshake, the lighting changes and the music turns to triumphant brass horns.

The Battle of Horseshoe Bend fills the stage with choreographed hand-to-hand combat, gun and cannon fire, smoke and noise. As an entertaining spectacle the scene seeks to represent something ultimately unknowable – the heat of battle. There is no historical evidence to suggest that Junaluska personally saved Jackson’s life, no proof that Tsali was in attendance among the Cherokee warriors or that there were 3,000 warriors at the battle as the drama claims. According to documents left by the Americans recording the battle the Cherokee forces were under the command of Major Ridge not Junaluska (Mooney [1900] 1992). But Major Ridge was a proponent of the Treaty of New Echota and is not a hero among the Cherokee like Junaluska or Tsali.

Scene 4 – *Tsali’s wife Wilani rocks a cradle and speaks with Mrs. Perkins, a broadly comic White hillbilly character, about married life and raising babies. Mrs. Perkins jokes about domestic life. Tsali returns and he and Wilani embrace.*

After the serious, history-making actions of men, the audience is treated to a little comic relief as the drama turns to the lives of women. Wilani rocks a cradle and converses with Mrs. Perkins, a broadly comic hillbilly character. Like a character out of *Hee-Haw*, Mrs. Perkins speaks with heavily accented English, saying things like “purdy” for “pretty.” By comparison the Cherokee characters, other than their perpetual use of the third-person, sound almost mid-Western in their straight-forward, undrawled speech. Wilani expresses her concern for Tsali who is away fighting, but Mrs. Perkins soothes her, speaking woman-to-woman, “Now Wilani the first thing a bride’s got to learn is not to worry about her stupid husband.” The audience laughs, Mrs. Perkins is a crowd favorite. Tsali returns, the dialogue ends and the soundtrack returns with strings and harps. Tsali and Wilani exchange gifts and

he holds his child. This is a melodramatic moment aided by the very affective music, the whole intent of which is to make the audience care deeply for and identify with Tsali, thus make his impending death more traumatic.

Scene 5 – *The Eagle Dance, the drama’s signature dance number, involves eight men with eagle wands and one great eagle dancer with oversized wings. The dance, filled with smoke, fire, and drumming, is portrayed as a celebration of the returning victorious warriors.*

The audience has felt the thrill of battle in Scene 3, then laughed and felt their heartstrings pulled in Scene 4. But the Eagle Dance in Scene 5 was where people really got their money’s worth with a full-on spectacle of drums, fire, and Indians dressed as animals. As the lights come up the narrator speaks in the transition, “Indians and Whites gathered in village after village to celebrate the great victory. And in the Great Smokies, Drowning Bear’s village reached back, far into their primitive past and brought back a dance of triumph so that their White friends might see it. The Great Eagle Dance.” This narration is very important as a frame for what follows. The dance is explained in terms of military success to remove audience apprehensions about witnessing a pagan ceremony. It is described as primitive and of the past, thus authenticating it though the dance itself is really a combination of modern dance and ballet and not traditional Cherokee dance. Finally it places the audience in the moment by suggesting that it is being performed for White friends. The audience can be assured that they are legitimately witnessing what happened after the Battle of Horseshoe Bend as peers and guests. The dancers take the stage: eight men in loincloths with Eagle wands, four women with baskets, and a painted Great Eagle dancer with huge eagle wings.

They fill the whole center stage, their movements are skilled, the dance demanding and strenuous.

Scene 6 – *A White female shopkeeper tends her store while four White male hillbilly characters discuss the prospect of gold on Cherokee land. A small Cherokee boy enters and the men act menacingly toward him. The shopkeeper threatens the hillbillies with her rifle. The slick Reverend Schemerhorn and one of his henchmen enter, announcing the government's plan to buyout the Cherokee's land.*

By this point in the play the sun has long since set and the frogs are singing loudly from the trees. As the lights come up on Scene 6 the narrator speaks again, “The hopes of the Cherokee were slowly crushed by the rising tide of White settlers.” Again, a naturalistic metaphor is used to describe U.S. colonization, it is like a force of nature rather than the consequences of human action.

Scene 6 introduces a new kind of “bad” White (which have so far been foreign, the Spanish and the British), American Whites, who other than the harmless Mrs. Perkins, have only been alluded to by Tecumseh. The narrator informs the audience that it is 1835 and the Georgia gold rush is on. In a frontier trading post there is a White female storekeeper and four White men, playing broadly comic hillbilly characters. One man enters and buys a round of drinks for his three idiot friends. When the drink buyer pulls out a gold nugget two of the seated men leap up, tossing their tin cups over their shoulders. The fourth man catches the cups and does an impromptu juggling act as the buyer fights to keep possession of his gold from the other two men. These hillbillies are both threatening and amusing, their comedy is physical and their English is heavily accented. A Cherokee boy enters with a shopping list

from his mother and the men delight in terrorizing him. In the boy's defense the storekeeper pushes one of them into a hot stove and even pulls out her rifle on the other three.

"You're always sticking up for these redskins," cries one, "Maybe you're part Indian yourself."

"Well if I was I'd be proud of it," the storekeeper declares, inviting the audience to disidentify with "bad" Whites, i.e. hillbillies, and align themselves with a White who could be Cherokee.

Enter Reverend John Schemerhorn, the man who would deliver the Removal treaty to the Cherokee, with a silent henchmen following closely behind. This is another kind of "bad" White: a shyster politician from "Washington City."

The storekeeper pours him a drink and he leaps at it greedily, but she puts it away, "But I reckon you don't want one, seeing as how you're a preacher and all."

A man without scruples he cries, "Since we're down here on government business ain't doing any preaching right now!" After downing the drink, Schemerhorn announces his intent to make a deal with the Indians to buy their land, which the remaining three stooges find very attractive. "I reckon this will be about the best thing that's ever happened to the Cherokee." The lights darken as the music strikes one ominous minor chord.

Scene 7 – *The fast-talking Reverend Schemerhorn tries to trick the Cherokee into signing the Treaty of New Echota. There is a loud argument among Schemerhorn and Junaluska, Will Thomas, Tsali, Reverend Worcester, Elias Boudinot, and Drowning Bear. Junaluska announces his plan to visit the Whitehouse to take up the matter personally with President Jackson.*

The music is tense as the lights come up on Scene 7. Reverend Schermerhorn is summoning the Cherokee to a meeting in order to sell the government's plan to trade land in the east for land in Indian Territory. Schermerhorn is played like a fast-talking snake-oil salesman, he is rude and cuts people off when they want to open debate. Elias Boudinot shakes his hand but he says little making him seem a bit like Schermerhorn's pawn, like he's being tricked too, rather than the humanitarian he was. There is no mention of Major Ridge or his son, the two strongest proponents of the New Echota Treaty. Ultimately we must recognize that there was considerable debate within the Cherokee Nation as to the potential merits of Removal and though the U.S. clearly exploited the situation, not all Cherokee thought the treaty unwise.

Schermerhorn tries his best to ignore the consternation and concern rising from the Cherokee men around him including Drowning Bear, Will Thomas and Tsali. Again Hunter has taken his dramatic protagonists and put them in a situation where they could not have been present. The North Carolina Cherokee, having already left the main body of the Cherokee Nation via the Treaties of 1817 and 1819, would not have been attendance at the signing of the Treaty of New Echota.

"I want to know what it says!" cries one when he wants to see the treaty.

Schermerhorn snatches it away from him, "What it says? If you don't mind we'll take that up later. All we're doing here today is getting the treaty signed."

Part of what speaks to the audience here is deep suspicion among the working class (one of the principle constituencies of *Unto These Hills* audience) of the federal government and its agents. The U.S. military, an honorable institution, is another matter entirely but

politicians and their minions are not to be trusted. This is another way Whites can identify with Cherokee, as victims of bad government.

“You’ve got to trust the United States government,” Schemerhorn whines. That line always got a laugh.

Scene 8 – *Sam Houston, Junaluska, and John Ross along with their ally Senator Daniel Webster meet President Andrew Jackson at the Whitehouse. Jackson declines to get involved with the Cherokee protest of Removal and exits. Houston is furious, Webster evokes the principles of democracy. Junaluska curses having saved Jackson’s life.*

Scene 8 moves the action from center stage to far stage left where a wagon rolls out from behind a gate outfitted with an interior setting. Here the term “wagon” refers to a miniature set mounted on wheels that can be rolled out from backstage for a quick change of scenery. At the Mountainside Theater the wagon rests on tracks and can only be rolled out from far stage left. This scene is set in the Whitehouse with Sam Houston, Junaluska, John Ross, and their ally in the Whig party, Senator Daniel Webster, confronting President Andrew Jackson over the treaty forced onto the Cherokee. In the transition to Scene 8 the narrator gives a short American history lesson about the organization of the Whig party, state’s rights, and slavery with allusions to the impending Civil War. From the grand perspective of American history the present is made to seem inevitable, destined to be. This perspective marginalizes the Cherokee, their concerns dwarfed by the larger issues that defined the United States. *Unto These Hills* frames “the Indian question” as something forgotten in the shadows of more important concerns.

The two Whites aligned with the Cherokee, Webster and Houston (who would not have been active in such debates as he was then President of the Republic of Texas) do all the talking. Jackson is unmoved by their case. Ross threatens lawsuits. Junaluska pleads with Jackson by making reference to the impending threat of hillbilly invasion, “Mister President please believe us, our people are not safe even in their own homes. The very lowest class of Whitemen break in with no authority whatsoever.” Credit is due to Hayes for discovering that this line has been lifted from a letter written from Major Ridge to President Jackson describing the depredations Cherokee suffered as they awaited Removal following the signing of the Treaty of New Echota (Wilkins 1989:283). Moreover, Junaluska, who probably never traveled to Washington to meet with the President, is getting credit for the negotiations conducted by John Ross in opposition to Ridge.

After Jackson exits the scene Junaluska declares, “If I’d of known this was going to happen, I would have let him die at Horseshoe Bend.” Whereas the tourist audience is typically silent after that line’s delivery, on “local’s night” a dress rehearsal when the audience is almost entirely Cherokee, it typically elicits great applause. Even so it is considerably tamer than the version printed in Mooney’s *Sketch*, which has Junaluska saying with homicidal agency not benign neglect, “If I had known that Jackson would drive us from our homes I would have killed him that day at the Horseshoe” (1992:97). This line reinforces the drama’s version of Junaluska’s legend that some contemporary Cherokee still recite as fact: that he personally saved Jackson’s life.

Scene 9 – *Mrs. Perkins helps Nundeyeli, Tsali’s daughter, prepare for her marriage to Suyeta, Drowning Bear’s son. The audience is introduced to Tsali’s three sons. There is a*

choreographed Cherokee wedding ceremony. The scene is interrupted by the arrival of Major Davis and the U.S. Cavalry. Will Thomas reads a scroll declaring the Major's orders: to round up the Cherokee in stockades and Remove them west.

In transition to Scene 9 the narrator informs the audience that it is 1838 and lights rise on a lively Cherokee village scene at center stage. Enter Mrs. Perkins who is helping Nundeyeli, Tsali's daughter, prepare for her wedding to Suyeta, Drowning Bear's son – a fictional union imagined solely for the drama. The contrast with the Whitehouse scene is sharp and melodramatic. The audience is being pulled two ways at once: the seriousness and fateful debate in Washington of men expressed as a clash of nations, and the happy and trivial lives of women in the mountains embodied by wedding parties. Mrs. Perkins makes the scene comic with jokes at her husband's expense. The characters smile, laugh, and show their joy for the occasion.

The characters are preparing to reenact a "traditional" Cherokee wedding ceremony and as with the Eagle Dance the ritual is framed in a way that assuages the audience's apprehensions about witnessing non-Christian practices and authenticates it by invoking the past. Mrs. Perkins states, "All those young'uns are going to have a church wedding and an old-timey Cherokee wedding. I reckon they'll be *really* married when they get through."

When the Reverend Worcester expresses concern about the "old ways" his wife reassures him, "I'm sure our Lord will understand." The Worcester family, known for Samuel Worcester's landmark 1832 Supreme Court case against Georgia, only makes an appearance in the drama because of their name recognition. There is no documentation to suggest that they ever lived in North Carolina or knew Drowning Bear and Tsali.

In another instance of Hunter's universalism Nundeyeli weeps that she's so happy she wants to cry. The audience is then reminded it is bad luck for the groom to see the bride before the wedding. This flattens cultural difference between Cherokee and Whites, imagining a Western ideal type of weddings extended onto Cherokee practices of marriage. It could also be read as acting in concert with the recontextualization of non-Christian marriages to function as a means of assuaging audience apprehension about being in the presence of rituals staged as if primitive.

The dance begins to flute music and deep chimes, sounding almost oriental or reminiscent of Peter Gabriel's world beat inspired music. One lead dancer with a staff represents a ritual official of sorts and conducts the movements of a team of four couples, one of whom is the wedding couple. The dancers go through ritualistic motions while the bride and groom trade blankets and share a drink from a stirrup spout pot. Suddenly there is the sound of gunfire and screams as Major Davis and the U.S. Cavalry interrupt the ceremony, echoing De Soto's entrance in Scene 1. Soldiers surround the wedding party as Major Davis hands Will Thomas a proclamation dictating that the Cherokee are to be moved to Tahlequah, Oklahoma, another inaccuracy because Tahlequah, founded in part by Cherokee refugees, does not yet exist nor was there any state of Oklahoma, only Indian Territory. The lights fade slowly to black as ominous music fills the theater. A fifteen-minute intermission begins.

Scene 10 – *A military officer dolls out compensation to Cherokee waiting in line while creditors hover nearby to relieve them of their money. At far stage right Tsali and Wilani struggle with two soldiers. Wilani is killed, Tsali and his three sons kill two soldiers in*

reprisal, more soldiers chase them off far stage right. Major Davis makes a bargain with Junaluska to allow the refugees hiding in the mountains to escape Removal in exchange for Tsali's capture and execution.

Late in the evening the mountains can bring a chill wind, even in the summer time. Some tourists snuggle under blankets or curse their coats forgotten in cars. As the second act begins the cinematic score soars above the frog songs and humming insects as the narrator makes allusion to the Declaration of Independence and the Book of Job via Hunter's universalism,

Out of the great womb of destiny, into the doorway of the world come the souls of men, created equal in the sight of God. When their day is done, they return, still equal into the bosom of the eternal. Somewhere between, on the plains of human life, caught in the monstrous mistakes that men devise to plague each other, it is the fate of some people to undergo pain and misery and to be twisted on the rack of greed and hatred. The Cherokee were beginning to realize that at last their time had come.

Hunter clearly has a gift for the grand language required of epic history. The narrator's introduction to Scene 10 contextualizes Removal in cosmic terms, among the works of humans it is insignificant before God (if not expressly against His wishes) but it is also naturalized in terms of the fate and resignation of those who suffer for it.

Scene 10 begins with lights coming up on a line of Cherokees standing before a military clerk dishing out compensation for their land, "\$56.38," paid to individuals rather than the Cherokee Nation. Will Thomas, a "good" White, demands an explanation for why some names are left off the list. Meanwhile two debt collectors, "bad" Whites, hover over the scene ready to take the Indians' money immediately after the clerk pays them. Major Davis intervenes, seizing the vultures' moneybox and giving it to Drowning Bear, for the military leader is a man of valor with conflicted emotions about his mission. The whole scene is set

outside the stockades where the Cherokee refugees are being kept until the journey west begins. The audience does not see the horror of the Cherokee experience of being inside the stockades, instead the gaze is focused on the decisions of commanding officers and chiefs outside.

Davis reveals he is aware that there are still Cherokee families hiding in the mountains, introducing the drama's myth for the creation of the Eastern Band out of the fugitives that somehow escaped Removal. The myth's legendary character Tsali along with Wilani and their three sons enter as captives of two soldiers at far stage right. One drunken soldier mercilessly torments Wilani knocking her to the ground and then striking her dead. Tsali kills his wife's murderer while his sons subdue the other soldier. Outside of *Unto These Hills* many different versions of Tsali's legend circulate and the historical evidence that does exist, military reports and Will Thomas's late life interviews with James Mooney, are partial at best. Tsali's wife, however did not go by the name Wilani, nor was she killed by soldiers. Nor is there reason to suppose that the soldiers that captured them were drunk. This whole encounter is completely fabricated for the drama, a topic discussed further in Chapter 7.

From center stage, at the stockades, a Lieutenant orders soldiers to pursue Tsali who flees with his boys into the trees of far stage right. With soldiers no longer guarding the stockade gate some Indians charge from the wings of center stage left. In this scene historical events have been rearranged and compacted as the forced round-up of Cherokee into stockades took place in June of 1838 while the Tsali incident did not occur until November of that year.

Major Davis argues to Junaluska, "Now you listen to me, I didn't chose to do this." Again the U.S. military, embodied by a scrupulous officer, is absolved of its role in Cherokee

Removal because blame is best placed on the federal government and its crooked politicians, epitomized by the arrogant and unfair Jackson and his con-man Schermerhorn. Junaluska's pleas for mercy to Major Davis underscore Hunter's universalism with a masculine twist, "Tsali is a man, like you or me."

Davis makes a bargain with Junaluska that is the crux of Tsali's myth that the remaining Cherokee families in hiding can stay in their homeland if Tsali is captured and executed. Hunter has selected Davis, who goes unmentioned in the historical documents relevant to the Tsali incident, to be a sympathetic White. It is known that many men in the U.S. army who participated in Removal had misgivings about the operation. This is represented in Davis's stage character for the purpose of providing a "good" White in a position of power to contrast with Jackson's villain.

Junaluska, who never had the authority to command fellow Cherokee, orders Drowning Bear and Will Thomas to fetch Tsali, though they both protest. The impending tragedy is underscored by Junaluska's melodramatic delivery, "Will Thomas will speak to Tsali in the name of our people. He will ask Tsali to come back (choke) and die."

Scene 11 – *Tsali and his sons are in hiding at far stage right. Will Thomas and Drowning Bear try to persuade him to surrender. Drowning Bear makes overtures to Sequoyah's speech from Scene 2. Tsali curses all Whitemen. Thomas and Drowning Bear retreat. Later at Wilani's funeral (Scene 11a) Tsali sneaks down after everyone has left to cut a piece of cloth from her dress.*

Lights come up on Tsali and his sons far stage right at the start of Scene 11. Drowning Bear and Will Thomas enter from center stage and listen to Tsali tell the tale of

their capture by American soldiers and the murder of his wife. Angrily to Will Thomas he cries, “White! Always the Whiteman brings death to the Cherokee!” And spitting at his feet he declares, “Tsali hates Whitemen.”

Drowning Bear describes Davis’s bargain, but Tsali thinks it’s a trick. To persuade him Drowning Bear invokes Sequoyah’s message of peace from Scene 2, but Tsali is still unmoved. Tsali embraces his three sons in an image of defiance that would become one of the drama’s most iconic. Drowning Bear and Will Thomas turn to go. When Will Thomas looks back, as if to say something that slipped his mind, the oldest son raises his rifle at him. Fade to black and a sad oboe lilts into the darkness. Tsali’s racial hatred could not be made more explicit by this scene yet at the same time his character is doomed. Through his imminent sacrifice Tsali transcends his flaws and Cherokee hatred for Whites is symbolically buried with him.

In an innovation that has become wholly embraced by *Unto These Hills*’ legacy, long-time director Bill Hardy introduced a transitional Scene 11a, Wilani’s funeral. The mourners sing “Wayfaring Stranger” under very dim lights. Even Major Davis pays his respects. After everyone departs Mrs. Perkins gives a birdcall and Tsali and his sons scamper down from far stage right to visit the body. Tsali cuts off a piece of Wilani’s dress before they all slink back into the darkness.

Scene 12 – *Major Davis, Will Thomas, Junaluska and Reverend Worcester confer. The Cherokee tribe amasses at center stage left for Removal. Tsali and his sons appear at far stage right to surrender, he speaks to the tribe assembled. Ann Worcester saves Tsali’s youngest son, the others are marched off-stage with the firing squad. Elias Boudinot recites*

Psalm 121 in the Cherokee language, rifle shots ring out. The Removal proceeds slowly from center stage left to far stage right, Junaluska makes a dramatic exit.

The lights are still low at the start of Scene 12 to signify dawn as Major Davis wakes his soldiers. Briefly he speaks with Will Thomas who describes his landholding scheme that will allow some Cherokee to stay in Quallatown. Reverend Worcester declares his intent to head west with the tribe. Junaluska instructs Drowning Bear to remain in the east though he never would have had the power to command a fellow Cherokee. As Drowning Bear was chief of the Oconaluftee Cherokee he was exempt from Removal and never would have left anyway.

The tribe enters center stage left for the Removal and almost simultaneously Tsali and his sons enter from far stage right to surrender. Tsali's surrender marks his transformation into a "noble savage," he is embracing his fate to be sacrificed. Historically this never happened so gracefully, some versions of the tale have Tsali being apprehended deep in the mountains by Will Thomas and Euchella. Nor was he executed by American soldiers, rather it was his fellow Cherokee that dispatched him even without the U.S. military present. What Cherokee motives were in cooperating in Tsali's capture we can only guess, but it might have been out of fear that their powerful enemy would exact reprisals upon the tribe for his alleged crime.

Ann Worcester moves quickly to save Tsali's youngest son from execution. Tsali speaks to the tribe before he and his two remaining sons depart offstage with the U.S. Calvary firing squad. The tribe, ostensibly assembled for the purpose of Removal, becomes a choir and sings "Amazing Grace" in the Cherokee language. Elias Boudinot takes center stage and reads Psalm 121 also in the Cherokee language but with a voice over translation.

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.
My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.

As mentioned earlier this scene is anachronistic as Boudinot and the Worcester family had already emigrated to Indian Territory months prior to Tsali's capture.

"Ready. Aim. Fire!" Shots ring out from off-stage. Tsali's youngest son runs across the stage and is caught by Major Davis who returns him to Ann Worcester. The Removal begins. Very slowly the body of the tribe walks from center stage left to far stage right, there is moaning and wailing. Some characters stumble and are harassed by soldiers, most are carrying bundles or blankets. The last to exit, Junaluska takes center stage with a spotlight as he hoists the Eternal Flame before marching west too. The narrator's voice speaks as the score crescendos, "In the dust of that summer, in the snow and ice of that winter, five thousand people, nearly one third of the whole Cherokee Nation died and were buried in nameless graves along the Trail of Tears. From North Carolina to Oklahoma." But of course, the main body of the Cherokee Nation was Removed from Georgia and Alabama, and at the time Oklahoma did not yet exist while the North Carolina Cherokee had already succeeded from the Cherokee Nation in 1819 in hopes of becoming American citizens. Unmentioned are the thousands more who had already died in holding at the stockades before the journey even began.

Scene 13 – *Drowning Bear and Will Thomas return to the Whitehouse with Daniel Webster, this time to meet President William Henry Harrison. In their conversation the Removal is characterized as a mistake, regrettable but inevitable. Drowning Bear presses the President for American citizenship. Harrison pledges to protect the Cherokee. As the lights come down on the scene the narrator explains that Harrison died two weeks later.*

Among the alumni of the classic drama Scene 13 was notorious. Time and again I heard it described as “pointless” and “interminable.” The Whitehouse set is again rolled out on a wagon from far stage left as Drowning Bear and Will Thomas return to Washington to unite with Senator Daniel Webster and meet President William Henry Harrison. Usually this is around the time that audience members start checking their watches and some, such as locals who come to the drama simply because there’s nothing else to do, choose to leave early.

Senator Webster speaks to the President, “If the government had been wise these people would still be cultivating those hills and valleys in the Great Smokies. Removal was a mistake.”

President Harrison, who first gained notoriety as a U.S. military officer by defeating Tecumseh at the Battle of Tippecanoe and was probably not sympathetic towards the Cherokee, says contemplatively, “Perhaps Daniel, but we can’t change the past.”

As much as this scene becomes the butt of jokes for *Unto These Hills* insiders it does serve some dramatic purpose. First it contextualizes Removal as complete rather than ongoing, as if the colonization of North America were over. Removal is absorbed into a part of American history. Second, in the words of long-time actor Emmett Furrow, “You don’t want people to go home and slit their wrists for being White.” Scene 13 provides a denouement off of the tragedy of Removal.

Drowning Bear, who died in 1839 would have never had the opportunity to meet Harrison. But in the drama they are able to have an intimate chat in which Harrison suggests it would be best for the North Carolina Cherokee to move west too. Drowning Bear, essentially explaining manifest destiny to the President of the United States, argues that

Indian retreat from White American would not make a difference. “The Indian will never be safe until he is a part of the government like the Whiteman himself, only after they make Cherokee American citizens.” Drowning Bear’s quest for enfranchisement echoes similar appeals by the substantially more visible African-American movements, which were contemporary with the early decades of the drama’s performance. Inspired by Drowning Bear’s noble quest for citizenship, and hence acculturation into mainstream White America, Harrison promises to work towards making Indians citizens. Arguably the North Carolina Cherokee were already citizen Indians by the Treaties of 1817 and 1819, though that status would remain contested throughout the nineteenth century because of U.S. and North Carolina reluctance to recognize it.

Scene 14 – *Lights come up on happy young Indians and Whites square dancing. Drowning Bear and Will Thomas are present for the birth of Nundeyeli’s son. Junaluska returns from Indian Territory to bid his friends farewell. Junaluska makes another dramatic exit. The end.*

In the transition to Scene 14 the narrator announces that President Harrison was dead in two weeks so the preceding scene, fictional though it may be, was essentially without consequence. The narrator continues, “War was coming. Times were changing. America was growing up. The past was becoming a hazy dream.” The Whitehouse set is rolled away behind the gate at far stage left and lights come up on center stage and a group of happy young dancers. The North Carolina Cherokee are miraculously prosperous after surviving Removal and completely at peace with Whites. The narrator continues, “Sequoyah’s dream was coming true. His people were at last friends of their White neighbors.” There is a lively and boisterous hoe-down routine among Indian and White characters embodying the drama’s

myth of close and equal relations between Whites and Cherokee. At the end of the dance Mrs. Perkins enters and shoos them away hollering that Nundeyeli is having a baby. Cheers rise up from the dancers and the focus briefly shifts to Drowning Bear and Will Thomas as they talk about land purchases. The shift, like others that precede it, marks a strong dichotomy between the serious affairs of history-making men and the frivolous concerns of childbearing women.

At this moment Junaluska returns after having made the journey west to Indian Territory, like many others he eventually came back to the Cherokee lands in the east. But as if his dramatic exit in Scene 12 was not enough, Junaluska goes through the vanishing Indian routine one more time, “Junaluska will not trouble his old friends, he has very little time to live.” It is an unusual encounter because by this point Drowning Bear was already dead and Junaluska went on to live a prosperous and long life after his return to North Carolina. When Suyeta runs through the crowd announcing Nundeyeli has given birth to a boy Junaluska smiles. “Now Tsali too has a grandchild. Now Tsali lives again. Winter dies, spring comes. It is good. The sun of the old day is setting.” He makes his final farewell, “It is time to go.” The narrator comes on, referencing the opening lines of the play.

In the beginning was the land. In the beginning was freedom. In the beginning was peace. Once upon a time, out of the darkness of tragedy a man said, I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills. Once upon a time, out of the darkness of tragedy, a race of people looked beyond the years and devoted itself to the dream of its great leader when he said, it is not that a man's skin is black or red or white. Chose the way of peace, take all men as you brothers. This then was the dream of the Cherokee. This then is the hope of America.

The soundtrack strikes an uplifting major chord as the conclusion of the story brings everything back to American nationalism and its forward looking, future tense trope of

“hope.” In the end the Cherokee story is completely subsumed as exemplary of the American story.

Having it both ways with history

[There] was very little reason for pride among the Indians, save in the glory of their past... [The] Cherokee needed encouragement to rediscover crafts and arts from the past, and to take pride in the historic skills and traditions of the Tribe. (1970:128-129, 130)

Wallace Randolph Umberger, Jr.

The producers of Unto These Hills have every reason to believe that the drama has renewed the interest and pride of these people in their area, in themselves, and in their neighbors. (1970:144)

Wallace Randolph Umberger, Jr.

In the preceding section I established a thorough list of historic and cultural inaccuracies in *Unto These Hills*. Few if any of these errors were lost on Kermit Hunter or the directors that staged the show, yet having committed these errors to the stage they excused themselves for having made them with appeals to dramatic license. On the face of it there is nothing inappropriate or unusual about the need for artistic works that happen to deal with historic subject matter to be appreciated in a different way than the work of scholars or organic intellectuals who are charged with the task of representing and preserving history accurately. Like Hunter’s allegiance to the “spirit of history” the drama does not have to be accurate to claim authenticity. Instead there is realness to it that is imagined to go beyond fact. But many of these same agents also cataloged the “preservation” of history or the “pride” it evoked among Cherokee as the drama’s principle good in the community. This claim is made more complicated by the fact that some Cherokee, especially those of the generation who came of age in the drama’s heyday, agree with this claim and make it

themselves. They note that even though the drama was inaccurate it made people aware of and interested in their history and culture at a time when it was more denigrated in American society than it is today.

Hunter was well aware of how an accurate history would constrain his script and he had little concern for critics of his history. His mentor Sam Seldon felt that strictly authentic Cherokee costumes would have been “decidedly plain in contrast to what the average theatergoer conceives as being American Indian” (Umberger 1970:41). As they planned the drama’s debut Seldon relayed to Harry Buchannan the playwright’s dilemma in representing Cherokee history, writing that the Cherokee “had only very dull music and still more neutral dances, and left most of the fighting for their rights to their white friends. If this is true, the actual Indian material is not very exciting.” Hence Hunter was pressured to create heroes, to embellish history with myth, and generally punch up the spectacle. One thing is familiar: concerns over the perceived “dullness” of authentic Cherokee attire, especially in comparison to the flamboyant Plains imagery favored by contemporary Hollywood representations. The nature of this problem has been and continues to be embodied in the street performances of Cherokee’s roadside “Chiefs,” local buskers who make a living from tips for having their picture taken.

Despite the claims of Hunter and others that the drama is meant as entertainment and not a history lesson in 1951 the Cherokee Historical Association produced a set of color slides, which accompanied with an abbreviated script, were lent to schools for use in the classroom. The brainchild of John Parris, who also spearheaded the Trail of Tears road trip mentioned earlier, there was enough demand for the slides that extra sets were produced for

distribution. If Hunter could comment on this no doubt he would disassociate himself from actions taken in the promotion of his plays that marketed them to children as history.

Part of the ideology surrounding the outdoor drama art form is the belief that it acts upon community members by infusing their everyday lives with a meaningful nationalist past. As Hayes puts it, “The benefits of outdoor drama productions extend not only to the viewer, but also to the community that is sponsoring the drama” (1982:28). For example Hayes quotes the general manager of *Trail of Tears*, a Kermit Hunter drama for the Oklahoma Cherokee that picks up where *Unto These Hills* ends. The drama is not only a training ground for Cherokee performing artists but a means of “introducing to the Cherokee people themselves an understanding of their own history in the hope of developing a better self-image” and thus leading to “a deeper communication between diverse people who have such totally inaccurate concepts about Indians” (1982:28). These are noble ideals. I admire them and do believe that they can be achieved through art. But regardless of the intent of the drama’s producers it must be noted that these claims to promoting a Native understanding of history are compromised when that history is so thoroughly whitened as it is Hunter’s plays. As I will show in later chapters, one of the most substantial obstacles facing the new CHA management in rewriting the drama was dissatisfaction among tribal members and non-Indian tourists alike who had taken the classic drama as fact. It is disingenuous to pontificate about educating people who have “totally inaccurate concepts about Indians” when the means by which one is seeking to address that shortcoming is so thoroughly flawed.

While certain agents involved in the production of *Unto These Hills* retreated from claims to historical accuracy, others promoted the play as a means of uplifting the Cherokee community by teaching them to appreciate their tribal culture and history. On the one hand

the play is absolved of its need to be historically accurate because it is only a play and meant to be entertainment not history, while on the other hand the claim is made that one of the great benefits of outdoor drama is that it teaches people history and their shared heritage. I am not suggesting that there have been no benefits to the Cherokee community from the legacy of *Unto These Hills*. Clearly there have been major economic benefits to the tribe from the drama as well as lasting personal and emotional benefits for the many families and individuals that worked backstage and onstage during the drama's run. But these are not the points being made by Hayes, Hunter, and other proponents of *Unto These Hills* as exemplary of the outdoor drama art form.

The Business of Producing Cultural Performance: A Season of Office Work at the Cherokee Historical Association

In this section I recount some stories of the time I spent working in the CHA business office. In a linear fashion I begin with my first days on the job then move through the spring into the chaos surrounding the opening weekend. I continue through the summer run of *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* until my contract expired in September.

January

It was early in the New Year and the mountain winds were starting to turn cold and wet. I was temporarily working two jobs: my adjunct teaching at Haywood Community College was not complete from the fall because in addition to teaching college students I also had responsibility for two classes at Tuscola high school. The college courses already done and grades turned in, my attention turned to the high schoolers who were on a different schedule and still had a couple of weeks of class to go. Meanwhile, I started my new job as a contract employee at the Cherokee Historical Association ostensibly cataloging their archives, though as I would prove myself trustworthy that role would expand with time.

The offices of the Cherokee Historical Association are housed in a brown two-story building in downtown Cherokee that has an odd triangular floor plan. For many Cherokee it is known only as the box office to *Unto These Hills* the inner workings of the upstairs and

offices, guarded by the non-Indians who once managed it, remained a mystery. In 2006 a full year after the tribal take-over of the CHA, with tribal members in leadership positions throughout the Association is beginning to open up. If you entered the building's main entrance to the left would be the box office ticket windows, dark now in the off season, to the right a miniature history exhibit highlights the fantastic accomplishments of the many individuals who helped to build the drama into a middle twentieth-century juggernaut. Straight ahead is a small window that looks into the business office where I claimed a desk next to Linda, the CHA's executive assistant.

Working upstairs is Chelsea our accountant, friendly and talkative. She tells me about the funny calls I can expect to take like, "Is the reservation open?" or people looking for information about their Cherokee ancestors and for information about getting enrolled in the tribal membership. Linda giggles in acknowledgement as Chelsea recounts this litany of bizarre and forthcoming telephone encounters. Later Chelsea tells me that she keeps a copy of Mooney on her desk and sometimes reads myths between her daily tasks. She hates snakes but explains if you throw a black snake in a tree it will rain, something she knows well from personal experience. Her grandmother is a Baptist and believes in the Bible and not teaching some cultural things but, "It's fun to read about what they used to believe."

It was in those first few days at the CHA that out of one yellow filing cabinet Linda produced an unpublished manuscript by John Parris (1951), a well-known newspaperman and local writer from Asheville. It was a partial account of a 1951 publicity stunt promoting the drama – some locals accompanied Parris as they retraced the Trail of Tears passing out flyers for *Unto These Hills*, even managing to stop at the Hermitage along the way. I was so

grateful to find additional material for the installation I was planning at the Lift Culture House galleries.

“This is really turning into something,” James said as he provided me with some framed images from the drama’s heyday. In February the director of the new show, Hanay Geiogamah, will be in town to do a meet-and-greet with the locals at Lift and my show, done in collaboration with local artist Natalie Smith, will provide the backdrop. Geiogamah’s dance troupe, the American Indian Dance Theater, will perform in a fundraiser for the CHA at Harrah’s. Today the office’s frantic pace is dictated by a 3pm deadline to submit the ad announcing the Lift show in the local paper, The Cherokee One Feather. We picked out an iconic image of Ollie Wahneeta and put it with type. Once that it is done we have to borrow some mannequins from Western Carolina University and get the old costumes dry-cleaned.

However, the day is moving slowly for Linda and she’s taken to leafing through the CHA’s decades-old collection of One Feather back issues, finding a wedding announcement for one of our current Board members, Mary Jane Ferguson. Chelsea and James gather around.

“I didn’t know she was a Bigwitch.”

“Me either.”

“Look, Charlie Saunooke was an usher.”

* * *

Symbolically the CHA occupies a position of power in the geography of downtown Cherokee: across the street from the Qualla Arts and Crafts Co-op and the Museum of the

Cherokee Indian, walking distance to EBCI Council Chambers and the Tribal Ceremonial Grounds. The Oconaluftee River gurgles amicably past the building's rear and the CHA general manager's office has an impressive picture window view onto its calming ripples. "The Hill," our name for the location of the Mountainside Theater and Oconaluftee Indian Village, rises behind the Museum and Co-op. There is both cooperation and jockeying for position among Cherokee's "cultural" players and while the sun sets on the CHA's influence it is ascendant for the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, conspicuously absent from this old school line-up along Tsali Boulevard. Lift, the location of our history installation, is the newest addition and its proprietors, Natalie and Leon, are still trying to find their footing among the Cherokee establishment.

I'm still trying to find my footing too. I report to the CHA one morning to find James, John, and Linda stuffing envelopes to be sent off to the CHA membership with invitations to the exhibit opening. According to the CHA's by-laws, the association's membership is by invitation only and limited to 100 individuals. Back in the day it was a very exclusive club for western North Carolina politicians and businessmen, but nowadays the membership gets only one meal a year and an annual report at the November meeting.

James dismisses the role of CHA's membership under the old regime and imagines the former organization as ideologically compromised, bent on "helping the poor Indians." Adding, "But now it needs to serve a different purpose."

I offered to help with the sorting but only got a, "No thanks." Quiet morning. Usually there is some music on at least.

Later I was moving objects into Lift for the installation and set the alarm off when I went out the wrong exit. A truck arrived from the backstage with Wilani's funeral bier, Natalie and I thought that prop especially appropriate, symbolizing the death of the old drama.

Back at the office chatting with Linda I told her I live in a trailer park just outside the reservation called Old Mission Estates. "That area's a little rough," she says. "Crime has really been on the rise in that part."

When we moved into our trailer there were no deadbolts on our doors. The doors had been manufactured to accept them so when Jess's folks paid us a visit in the summer of 2005 I headed down to Wal-mart with my father-in-law and together we installed the locks. I thought it strange when my landlord arrived to collect rent and he was genuinely offended by my actions. To my mind I had made a capital improvement to his property. Based on Linda's opinion I make a mental note to do a better job of locking my car.

Later a visitor came in wanting to know who installed the cover over the fairgrounds grandstand. I think he was from Biloxi. Linda sent him to the fairgrounds office and the tribal offices.

"That was an unusual question," I said.

"They think we are information for everything," she replied. "Everything."

At the end of the day I moved more stuff into Lift then ran errands collecting the last few things Natalie needs. When I returned to the CHA I spoke with John, he did not know which costumes I wanted to display so he just took what he thought were the most

flamboyant ones. I brought them over to Lift but the café was closed for an emergency plumbing job. I could not get any information about when they will reopen, Natalie and Leon seem to have left town.

* * *

In the CHA archives is a metal locker over six feet tall and about three feet wide, full of video and audio recordings. John and I teamed up to find a VHS player and I set it up with a little TV in his office. One tape was a local news spot from the 1990s where the CHA marketing and promotions director was claiming *Unto These Hills* was still receiving 100,000 visitors a summer. An estimate of 90,000 would be more accurate for the early 1990s. That would decline to 44,000 in 2004, the year the old CHA collapsed.

I turn to John, “Maybe they were in denial?”

He nods. If we were getting 90,000 costumers a season paying sixteen dollars a seat we would not be financially strapped. The old regime was on a sinking ship but did not know it. John relayed how even their bankers told stories about them. How their business plan was, “We’re just going to go until we’re bankrupt.”

“That’s why it’s kind of exciting because there’s these small tweaks that may give us a better show and save us a lot of money,” John says. If we got another two dollars per person at the concession stand that is \$90,000 and we could break even. “Just by doing pretty basic stuff,” like speeding up the bathroom lines with new facilities or speeding up concession lines by selling bottled drinks instead of using soda fountains.

On my break I walk over to Lift to talk with Natalie and drink coffee. Our exhibit is complete in her gallery but all I can see are the imperfections. When a Cherokee couple entered I chatted with them about it. They asked me questions and I was actually able to answer them!

That same day I had brought an unusual videocassette with me to the coffee shop. It was in some odd professional format, not the type that would play in a typical consumer electronics player. I thought Leon might be able to identify it because he had done digital video and multimedia art in the past. As Leon turned it over in his hands he confessed his ignorance, but pointed out his friend Sean Grady who was having lunch at the café. Sean is an old TV hand and recognized the oblong shaped cassette. His dad was a professional actor, he said, and maybe he has the thing that could play this. I sat down with him and listened as he told of how his father's acting career began with *Unto These Hills*, the drama is also how Sean met his wife who was an usher.

"In the 70s there was this push to make the show more authentic and they hired a new director," he began. "This guy's idea of authenticity was to have the dancers perform in loincloths without underwear. So when they danced their flaps went up and you could see everything. Anyways this showed at the Indian night dress rehearsal and everybody was shocked. That was the only time it happened."

"You see," I said, "There's all these stories you never hear."

"That one's not recorded in the history books."

* * *

Today Linda is inventorying some crafts from the Village gift shop, baskets and beadwork. They are mostly white oak and maple, but one was double-weave river cane retailing for \$1,600. Even the oak picnic baskets were in the \$400-600 range. While she did her work she told me a story about her previous job at the casino gift shop before she came to the CHA after its reorganization.

“There was this one Oriental lady who would come in and drop \$30,000 every weekend. And when you spend that much you get comps, good for \$100 at the restaurant, gift shop, whatever. They act like they’re giving them to you but really you’re buying them. And she would come to the gift shop and just buy everything because she had so many of them.

So one day she came in and said, ‘You so nice to me.’

And she was a pest but I was always nice to her.

‘You so nice to me and I already have all these things. You pick something and I’ll get it for you.’

And I said, ‘Well that basket is real pretty.’ It was a wastebasket.

‘Get it down,’ she said, ‘you can have it.’ And she paid for it with comps.”

“That must have been a couple hundred dollars,” I said.

“More than that,” Linda cheered. “Oh, I was so tickled to get that basket. I took it home and showed it off, ‘Look what I got!’ And I never use it as a wastebasket.”

* * *

The CHA's fundraiser with the American Indian Dance Theater at Harrah's is fast approaching. James tells me that the Chief's office called asking for comp tickets.

Sounding a bit like my father I told James, "You need to tell those guys, 'Get behind us on this one.'"

"I know," James said in frustration, "And if the Chief gets free tickets then the Council is going to want them too. This is a community fundraiser, if the community's not going to support us, then who is?"

The workday has a rhythm and periodically when things slow down James comes out of his office to chat with Linda and me. Like about being a youth councilor at the Boys and Girls Club, he had a technique for commanding respect from the kids, even the troublemakers. Stories about trips to Atlanta for Six Flags or to a nice restaurant in Asheville (after an etiquette class) transitioned into a platform for him to emphasize the importance of art, music, and drama in education. He is optimistic about the new Cherokee Central School being built with a performance space right in the middle of the campus.

"Of course it will have a 3,000 seat football stadium and a 3,000 seat basketball stadium but I want these kids to know that there's so much they can do besides football. I mean, if they like sports that's great but it's not preparing them for college. You hear about how football teaches leadership and teamwork but I don't see that."

"I see aggression," Linda adds.

James hopes that a renewed commitment to the performing arts at the primary and secondary school level will help provide the talent needed to make *Unto These Hills* more

rooted in its community. “So that it’s not just me for a couple of seasons or Lori Sanders for a couple of seasons. I mean, when I was Eagle Dancer my mom was there twice a week dragging in all my cousins.”

All this is getting back to the idea of ownership. Just today in Lift, Leon told me that people have been getting real nostalgic about the installation. One woman left in tears.

Back at the offices I was watching a tape of the CHA annual meeting from 1990. There was a roll call of guests including mayors, Congressmen, senators and representatives from the state legislature. After a state of the CHA address, Kermit Hunter speaks and he gives a brief interview that is tacked on to the end of the recording. He credits the long-term success of the play to the community.

“The large part of it is due to the people around here, who’ve supported it. If a show doesn’t have community backing and community pride it’s not going to make it,” Hunter said. “It’s just been a marvelous example of community cooperation.”

For decades however that definition of community has relied on the subordination of Cherokee interests to the interests of the non-Indians who controlled the drama’s operation. Now that the Cherokee were in charge and producing an all-new show, would the reservation community too step into a new role? And would the non-Indian community support this transfer of power?

February

Levi, Linda's teenaged son, came into the CHA to do his cleaning. The regular janitor had to take some time off to care for a family member and never came back so he comes in now to do the floors and take out the trash. Chelsea was downstairs too and each person took turns telling stories. Chelsea about a workman's comp case, Levi about getting pulled over for running a red light, and Linda mentioning that someone had given her a hard time on the phone. After the stories had been shared they each went back to their jobs.

I was sitting at my desk leafing through some archived material from the 1999 annual meeting when I said, "Somebody was rude to you?"

Linda sighed from the filing cabinets, "Oh Matt! In all my years working with the public I have never had someone be so rude to me on the phone before. She hung up on me. And then called back today and hung up on me again." She paused from her work to tell me the whole story.

"So I answered the phone and the person said, 'Can I speak with Margie?'

And I said, 'I'm sorry she doesn't work here anymore.'

And the lady, she was real short with me, said, 'Well what have you done with her? I have been working with Margie for seven years.'

And I was being very polite, I said, 'Well what can I help you with?' And she was trying to reach someone in marketing and promotions, which was Margie's old job. I said, 'I'm sorry ma'am but we don't have anyone in that position anymore. We have an ad agency and they take care of all that for us.'

And she said, ‘You Cherokee people, they’re not going to do anything for you but take your money. What have you done with Margie? I have worked with her for years and I’m here trying to do something for you. Now I need to speak with someone in marketing and promotions.’

I told her again, ‘I’m sorry ma’am we just don’t have anyone in that position anymore. Now you can talk with our executive director if you like.’

And she said, ‘You know what? Forget it.’ And she hung up.

Well I couldn’t believe it. She was so rude. And then she called again the next day. Right from the start she was real short with me, she said, ‘I called yesterday and spoke with someone who told me Margie doesn’t work there anymore.’

I said, ‘Yes, ma’am that was me you were speaking with.’

And she said, ‘Well I can’t believe you would fire Margie after all the years I’ve worked with her. I am in California and I am a proud old Cherokee woman by the name of Cheek.’”

“And there is no Cherokee family named Cheek,” Linda muttered.

“‘I don’t like your tone,’ she said.”

“So I told her, ‘Ma’am you can talk with our executive director.’ She said okay and right when she said that someone went into James’s office. I didn’t want to disturb him. So I said, ‘Ma’am he’s in a meeting right now but I can have him call you back.’

And she said, ‘You Cherokee people never call me back. I wait for weeks and you never call and I’m trying to help you.’ And then she said, ‘Just forget it,’ and hung up on me again.”

It seems that the new CHA staff is in the midst of some very real animosity regarding the changes taking place at the association and the drama, even for folks like Linda who had nothing to do with those changes.

That day in February the box office sold twenty-two tickets online for the 2006 performance. It was a huge vindication that what we were doing was right. Especially since James told me that when he approached the old board about selling tickets online they told him, “You’ll chase our costumers away.”

I found some interesting numbers in my archival work, tickets sold and revenue generated, and showed them to John. He pointed out that what was really needed were numbers detailing the operating costs. I spent the day tracking the information down and when I told him I found it he was ecstatic. He rolled a chair right up to my desk and started pouring over the data.

“Our overhead is unbelievable. They lost money on concessions? How can you lose money on Pepsi and popcorn? Refunds \$12,000? Sorry but we won’t be doing refunds. Rain checks sure, but you’re not getting your money back.”

I was extremely proud. I felt like I had done something useful and that overall I was on the right track. It also underscored the theme of the day: we were right to take the CHA away from the old leadership, they were doing a poor job and we can do it better.

John related a story James had told him about how the staff that ran the CHA mostly came on in the 1980s before computers were big. They did everything on ledgers and had one computer, which would crunch the numbers and print them out. The output got transferred back onto ledgers and then re-entered into the computer in some kind of weird hybrid system of paper and computing. “They definitely didn’t have Quicken,” he joked. John already had his hands full stream lining the box office scheduling which was poorly run with too much overtime draining the payroll.

“Is this going to make you unpopular?” I asked.

“Yes,” he insisted but laughing, “I’ve got a baby to feed. If this thing goes under, I’m out of a job.” Later he told me he had learned that each season the box office staff would print every ticket for every seat ahead of time and these were stored in filing cabinets: one drawer per day the drama was open. Then when someone ordered a seat staff would go look up the ticket to match it. At the end of the day all the unsold tickets were thrown away.

I was still puzzled at how the old Board of Trustees came up with projected attendance numbers. For example, in 1996 only about 78,000 customers patronized the drama yet the attendance estimate for 1997 was set at 90,000 or an increase of about 15%. What was this based on? James seemed to think they just made the numbers up, like they were wishful thinking.

“There was nothing scientific,” he said, “No tracking of attendance figures.” He implied that when the former staff came in the 1980s that decade had been good. So in the sharp slump of the 1990s everybody just figured it was a matter of time before things set themselves right. “But they never did anything to bring people back in. If you saw the show

30 years ago, it was basically unchanged. Even *Cats* changed, even *Oklahoma!* got new choreography.”

March

Linda mentioned she had found some 1979 letters from Hunter when there was controversy swirling around an article The One Feather ran attributing some nasty quotes to him, like how the Indians were savages before they were Christians (Oppy March 16, 1977). In reciprocity I decided to share that I had found some old record albums with Will West Long’s voice on them. Linda was so excited just at the prospect of hearing him speak! I mentioned that I had not been able to find a record player when she said, “Well there’s one here in this cabinet.” Sure enough there was an old Panasonic, turned the thing on but there were no speakers. Drove home, pulled the speakers off my sound system, and sped back to work. I got everything set up and we eagerly waited to hear the record but it was too slow to be audible. It must be a 78. Where am I going to find a turntable that plays 78s?

* * *

James came out of his office to chit-chat. We bashed Bush together and lamented the war. Then John appeared and he jumped on the anti-Bush bandwagon too. He was more enthusiastic, however, about some software he’d found for selling tickets as he’s had innumerable headaches dealing with our current ticket-sales provider who have missed many deadlines.

“The guy is so spineless he has his receptionist call,” he mocked. Then boasting, “I bet we can save a quarter million this year. They’ll be teaching us in business school.”

“No,” said James, “They’ll be teaching about the old administration of CHA as an example of what not to do.”

Break-time was over and we all went back to work. From my desk I heard James answer his phone, he must have been speaking to John, “What? How much? They’ve been screwing us!” My eye caught Linda’s and we laughed.

* * *

Today Linda is out with a sick kid, Chelsea was blocked in her driveway by a cement truck and James headed out for a meeting so basically it was just me. While I was doing my chores we got a lot of walk-ins. A foreign tourist stopped in for directions to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, an older White couple wanted to know what there was to do in town. A young White woman wanted to audition for the play and a middle-aged Indian woman also wanted a role. An older White man came in selling merchandise that could be printed with our logo. Another older White couple came in wanting folders for the museum to set out at Lake Junaluska.

After lunch John and I had a good conversation about the business of the CHA. He was still feeling burned by the ticket-sales provider, having been left in a very weak bargaining situation by the old CHA. It seems that rather than paying 50% upfront followed by monthly bills they had just paid \$114,000 upfront. Now the ticket-sales provider has all our money and thus has no incentive to deliver. John called this a “rookie mistake” and was flabbergasted that the Board had just “rubber stamped it.”

“We could break even this year without a rise in attendance. Not even considering the new show,” he said optimistically.

Since I had his ear I laid out one of my pet theories about the CHA. The association was basically a clique, a club for mountain area elite to network with one another. Why else intentionally limit your membership to 100 individuals and give lifetime appointments to the Board of Trustees? It was to maintain exclusivity. Then the purpose of the organization becomes not the production of *Unto These Hills* but the essential social services it offers its leaders. This a different set up than most non-profits where your members are boosters and the Board is made up of the top donors.

John asked, “Did the old CHA look upon the Cherokee paternalistically?”

“Yes,” I said, “Just look at how in the ‘50s the tribe wanted a cut of the drama’s revenue and Ross Caldwell fought for them to get a 10% share. The CHA defeated this measure because they wanted to control how they would benefit the community. So they provided scholarships and cash prizes at the Indian fair. The reasoning might have been – the Indians aren’t responsible enough, they would waste it, et cetera. Now this seems ironic because it was fiscal irresponsibility on the part of the CHA that led to its being bailed out by the tribe.”

* * *

As I finished rummaging through scrapbooks in Ross Caldwell’s box I hand them over to Linda so she can take a turn looking at them. She was especially interested to read that the Laubins (1989 [1977]) had received a drum from Will West Long. Since Long passed away before *Unto These Hills* debuted one wonders how the Laubins might have met Long on another occasion. She was very interested to learn what happened to the drum. I showed her a leather bound book with black and white photos of Big Cove pasted onto the

pages and her eyes lit up, “Oh my gosh! Let me send this email.” And she finished her work to look at it.

I move onto a box of photos marked “general,” sharing them with Linda as she completes her paperwork. She helps to identify places and persons. I came across a shot of Richard “Geet” Crowe and this prompted Linda to tell me a story.

“There is a mound here in town over behind Reservation Tire,” she began. A few years ago, more than three, she lived in a trailer that faced that land. She had separated from her husband and was living there with her kids. A bunch of men came with equipment and they went to work on the mound.

““What are they doing?” I wondered. Well the kids got curious and went over to meet them. They were archaeologists. They were so friendly. ‘Come on we’ll show you around.’”

They showed her some pottery pieces and Linda even got to keep some, which brought her great joy. “When I got that pottery piece, oh! I just squeezed it.” She smiles and looks up while clutching her hands to her chest. It was a magical encounter for her to have and hold something so old. The pottery piece itself had a pattern printed on it, “They dated it to 1700 something.”

The archaeologists showed her a fire pit, “Here you can see the different colors, that’s where they had a fire. They dug a hole here and covered it. The mound itself was a place where they put their trash.” She thought it was about the size or larger than the one down by Kituwah. The archaeologists found something they thought might be a grave, it had a stone at the head and one at the foot, but it was not excavated.

The reason why the archaeologists were there was because the tribe was putting in some water pipes nearby. Once they were gone construction crews came in and trenched the area for the pipes. “There was nothing in the newspapers, nobody said anything about it.”

I asked her, “There’s not much left of it?”

She said, “Some of it is still left,” but she was confused why it had been abused in that way. “Geet Crowe lived on part of that land. When he died he had himself buried there. Once there’s human remains there it can’t be disturbed.”

“So he protected the mound in his death?” I said and she nodded.

More machinery came in, graded some of the land and a big chain link fence was put up. She seemed perturbed that the mound was not protected or utilized, but mostly she was excited to have had such an intimate encounter with the past and to have held something “hundreds of years old.” I was amazed at the story of Geet Crowe’s strategic burial. It’s surprising that the tribe didn’t have the foresight to develop the mound into a resource somehow. Also I continue to be impressed of Linda’s love of old things. When we were talking about the classic car and hot rod show that came to town she said, “If I were a guy I think that would be so neat.”

April

In other news John is starting to go a little bit crazy. He actually cursed today in front of Chelsea and me, when Linda came in he just mouthed the curse words but did not actually speak them. The crisis *de jour* is a delivery of grip paint, which once applied is meant to keep

people from slipping on the theater stairs. John ordered two cases of yellow and one gray, he got delivered two gray and no yellow. He was already grinding his teeth over a missing delivery of roofing materials. When he went to the supplier they had no record of his purchase. Even after talking to “a million people” no one could help him so he decided to make a new order. Then the original order showed up. An expensive drug testing policy some of the Board members want to implement compounds his tension.

“He’s under a lot of stress. Poor guy.” Chelsea whispered. “I’m real busy, but at least I don’t have to put the show on.” He has seemed a little edgy lately but I guess it took someone more emotionally sensitive than me (and who works with him five days a week) to pick up on it and diagnose it as related to the impending deadline of the drama’s debut.

* * *

The Board eventually decided against drug testing, the \$12,000 price tag was a major deterrent. James was very insistent it was not necessary, “This is not Harrah’s where you have millions in cash and coins. This is not tribal. We’re just putting on a show for three hours.” The CHA can retain the right to test people they suspect of using drugs, but James said, “Even if someone who makes pots at the Village came to work stoned, I don’t see how that would affect their job.”

“They might make a bong instead of a pot,” I interjected, which got a laugh out of James and Linda.

When John came through Linda and I were talking about the “B” grade health ratings at Cherokee fast food restaurants.

“Don’t eat there, it’s an 84. That’s a low B.” Linda even called the 1-800 number on the back of her receipt to give the restaurant low scores. John was flipping through the One Feather, which is thick this week because enrollment is published for the upcoming per capita payouts. “It’s not good,” Linda assessed. Because the young people turning 18 and getting their first payout are then visible to “the vultures.”

“Who are the vultures Linda?” I asked.

“Car dealers?” John suggested.

Linda latched on to that one, “Next month the One Feather will be full of ads – ‘Come buy your car from us.’” She related that Wal-Mart is the most popular destination, “Everyone is so nice to us on per cap day. They’re smiling.”

Also today the old *Unto These Hills* signage came down. Across the street from our office was a “primitive” display of a spear resting across two shields pointing the way up the Hill. I wish I had my camera to shoot that.

May

Today I discovered a file folder with programs, photos, and papers all pertaining to Frontierland, an amusement park that was formerly located in the vicinity of where Harrah’s Cherokee Casino is today. I carried it around the offices asking if people remembered it.

“Oh I’m not from here, I’m Sioux,” one of the secretaries said. She married a Cherokee, adding that some of the Cherokee women were giving her a hard time for

marrying one of “their” men. John joined us and then we all talked about life in Cherokee as outsiders.

“Being a tourist town everything closes down at ten.”

“Ten? More like nine.” I said.

“I’m telling you!” she concluded.

John chimed in about life in Baltimore, “You’re five minutes from everything.”

James entered and saw what we were doing, “Frontierland! Oh. My. God.” He leafed through the stuff with us and sighed. “I miss Frontierland.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Because it was fun.”

“Why?” I persisted.

“Because there was one day in October where we all got to go for free before they closed. There were rides. I was a kid, I didn’t know any better.”

In the folder was a picture of Principal Chief Walter Jackson at Frontierland. I showed it to Linda, “I can’t believe that place went out of business. That place was real popular. Not very accurate, but it was popular with the tourists.”

We were trying to pin down some dates for when the park was open when Luzene walked through. Linda asked her if she remembered it and had it closed in the early 80s?

“Frontierland? Eeeww!” she squirmed. I showed her the tourist program and she made a cross with her fingers like to ward off evil incarnate. Frontierland certainly elicits some powerful memories.

* * *

As the production date nears I’ve become John’s assistant earning the nickname “Random Task,” a reference to the *Austin Powers* movies’ parody of the James Bond villain “Odd Job.” Today’s random task: Hanay will be arriving without towels or linens; go buy some and leave them in the A-frame cabin in the backstage. All that was needed was petty cash from Chelsea.

Our musical director Dennis Yerry, a Seneca, perked up at this, “Can I get reimbursed?” he pleaded.

“I wish,” John scoffed. His hands tied by budgetary constraints. Once I was clear on what was needed he dashed out the door to whatever awaited him next.

While I waited for Chelsea to return from lunch I chatted with the secretaries about where to go for towels and sheets. We floated the Dollar Store and the Barclay Outlet, but I eventually settled on Wal-Mart because I had other errands to run in Sylva. Namely I wanted some booze from the liquor store and had to deposit my paycheck at the bank both of which are only available off reservation. When Chelsea arrived we determined that Aaron had the company Wal-mart card and Chels summoned him on his cell muttering under her breath that there should be some kind of sign-out system to keep people from carrying the card around in their wallets. Aaron came soon and off I went in the CHA’s well-worn Honda Accord to buy

sheets and towels for Hanay. Also Chels needed to break a hundred and since I was a headed to the bank I did that too.

In the Wal-Mart I recalled that buying sheets for myself was a least favorite task and temporarily felt bewildered at the sight of thread counts and fabric qualities. It was a moment of absurdity. When I returned she seemed disappointed by the size of the bill but was grateful I brought her small change. John fished out the keys to the A-frame and handed me a gift basket to leave in Hanay's refrigerator. I drove up the Hill to drop the stuff off at the director's house, which is really smaller on the inside than it looks. Even though the AC unit was running the house was still warm and stale. Quickly I thought better of tossing the shopping bags on the bed and unpacked the new linens taking the plastic bags with me. Surely I was not expected to make his bed? I took one green grape from the gift basket and popped it in my mouth. Random task accomplished.

* * *

Today I must harangue the phone company into getting backstage phone lines turned back on. Things start to fall into place once I realized that the telephone company has our accounts under "Unto These Hills" instead of "Cherokee Historical Association."

When the lead dancers and actors arrive most are not pleased with what we have to offer in the way of accommodations. John was forced to scurry off to Wal-Mart to buy televisions, DVD players, AC units, and cordless phones. Back at the office he relayed to us that our stars did not even say "Thank you." Linda gasped at the revelation. "Who raised you?" John pleaded. When John learned that the male lead wanted new curtains for his room he seemed unsurprised.

* * *

Something funny happened today. Linda got an email from a tourist requesting information with the line, “Would like to see Indians dressed up.”

“Well you could come on Sunday,” she laughed.

* * *

Another day, another Random Task. John got a good deal on a bunch of used beds from the Ramada Inn and is having the VOC, Vocational Opportunities of Cherokee, put them in the dorms. However, despite having got nothing but static from Buddy, the production manager, on the decrepit state of the beds, John had no roster from him saying who was staying where. Moreover, no one had told the resident company that the new beds were coming so it was up to our stage manager, Katie, to call everyone first thing in the morning and give them the heads up that burly men were going to be knocking on their doors and taking their old beds. So after waiting more than ten minutes for coffee at the slow McDonalds and making small talk about cars, college basketball, and the arrogance of our stars John dropped me off at the top of the house where VOC was cleaning the bathrooms. I hung out with the VOC guys, sipping Dr. Pepper and listening to them bitch about the heat until they were ready to go. Thinking I had a truck for the beds they looked to me for a ride to the backstage housing. We walked. Down the steps, across the stage, over the bridge, past the dressing rooms, and up the road to the dorms. On the way one guy pulled out his cell phone and woke up his buddy with a truck. I pointed out which rooms needed the beds, all of which were stacked up in the lounge at the back of one of the dorms.

We talked while waiting for the one guy's friend with a truck to arrive and for John to show with the keys. "You ever been to any parties up here?" I asked

"Man, I come to one, chicks everywhere, running around topless. Wild. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. Until I passed out."

After lunch I figured out how to patch into the phone box at the dorm where the female lead wanted a new line. Radio Shack was closed, so I went back to the CHA, got the Wal-Mart card and the beat up Honda Accord, hoofed it to Wal-Mart where I bought two 100-foot spools of telephone wire and a box with terminals. I got to her place about 3:30 and finished the installation around 5:45. While I was there I tried to install her AC unit at the same time but it slipped out of the window and smashed on the concrete putting a huge dent in the side of its chassis. Of course it doesn't work now. I grabbed dinner at the Shell station and went to rehearsal.

June

Today is per cap day. I asked Linda how her family spends theirs. Usually, she says, they pay their auto insurance for the year and if the credit card is high they will pay that off. They might get their kids new shoes or new clothes. She says, "I'm a tight wad," and hopes she's setting a good example for her oldest son who will start getting his check next year. Apparently he is already interested in a new car, which led to more lessons about car insurance.

I spoke with James about the prospects for the new show and he's confident it will do very well. It might pose problems logistically for the first couple of weeks, but that will all get ironed out. Dennis predicted standing ovations.

Feeling me out Dennis asked if my dissertation would represent the "strife" going on behind the scenes, meaning the personality conflicts and arguments that have plagued the relations between CHA's management and the production staff. "Not so much," I told him and he was relieved. "All this is normal," he told me. "There's always conflict when creative people get together."

To Dennis the personality conflicts of this show are about on par with previous shows he has worked on. This led to some good stories about other confrontations he's been in like the time an alcoholic artist threw him into a stage wall or the crappy drum some descendent of Black Elk made for him and insisted he play. Dennis felt that considering how dated the classic *Unto These Hills* was and how good everything was going to be in the new show excepting the timing, transitions, and amateur actors but including the new music, dances, costumes, and story that people will be very impressed by the effort and applaud the changes.

Meanwhile James is still at odds with Hanay who told him to push the debut back a week and suggested postponing local's night. James nixed both these ideas. "It's not my problem," he said defiantly. "Your contract says June 8th."

"I told him to start rehearsals in May. Audition local people in February. He says, 'People aren't coming to rehearsal.' Well if we had started earlier Hanay would have learned who wasn't coming and replace them. He says, 'I know Indian people.' You don't know these people. I know these people."

James says that he “knew” some Cherokees would not show to rehearsal because, “We bitch and moan and complain but when it comes time to get off our butts and do something nobody wants to do it.” Linda, who usually affirms James I these types of vents, agreed it was unacceptable to let tourists see the show before the locals. James downplayed the importance of having the show perfect in time for local’s night, “People are going to be talking so much you won’t hear what’s on stage.”

Hanay warned James that the show was sloppy but James was sure the locals would not care. “Everyone will be talking about the set and the costumes, nobody’s going to notice such and such a transition.” Then he reiterated, “It’s not my problem,” and again indicated that the time crunch was of Hanay’s own making. “People have been waiting fifty-seven years for this show, I will not let them wait another week.”

Later he added, “That was the most civil argument I’ve ever been in.”

* * *

Another mission to Wal-Mart for theater supplies, this time I bought fabric, sharpies, hangers and labels but came up empty handed on childproof electrical outlet covers. After my return Linda ran an errand. Once she returned I installed a new AC unit for the female lead. I was actually supposed to be at rehearsal for five hours today. At the end of the afternoon I brought the busted AC to John’s office at the top of the house while the Battle of Horseshoe Bend was on stage. We looked down on the stage from the top.

“I think I’m in this scene,” I told him and we cracked up.

* * *

One of the box office crew was talking to Luzene about a disgruntled local who wanted free tickets for their unenrolled friend and was furious to hear that non-Indians could still get in free to the second dress rehearsal on local business night. According to Luzene the caller acted like it was a “spilling of blood.” She shrugged, “Any excuse to go nuts.”

* * *

Today is the premier. Like a sucker I’m in the office not doing much while who-knows-what action is taking place elsewhere. It is funny how this position was so liberating early on and now it is starting to feel more cumbersome. Something interesting did happen though. A cast alumnus showed up with some reel-to-reel recordings of the 1959 performance that he had transferred onto CD. Immediately I popped it into my laptop and there was the old organ, sounding like a black and white horror movie. Then operatic voices came in. It was so kooky.

“In my mind I can just see those old westerns,” Linda said. But the music was so terrible you could not listen to it for more than a couple of minutes. I advanced it to the Trail of Tears scene, which to Linda sounded like “funeral music.”

* * *

While Linda was at lunch James came out to talk to me. “Just this morning I took a phone call from a tourist looking to buy the DVD of the old show,” I told him. “She was very disappointed in the new show. ‘It was good if you’ve never seen the old one,’ she said though she qualified that with, ‘I’ve not been in 30 years.’ She was expecting some company and thought she’d take her friends to the show. ‘But I think I’d like to get the DVD and show them.’ And then she said, ‘Don’t take me wrong, the show was good. I just like the old one.’”

“It seems to me that some of these perceptions are based more on nostalgia than on an appreciation for the show,” I concluded.

James thought that some of them had their minds made up not to like the show before they arrived. Later in exasperation he would say, “Do you call the movie theater and tell them you don’t like the movie?” He compared audience dissatisfaction to the conflict with the old cast and production staff, who he held also felt like they had ownership over the play.

The tone around the office has changed. The panic is over. Hanay is out of town and though we are busy, things are returning to normal. After all, we have a show now. In that respect our mission is accomplished. All we can hope for now is that the tourists will come. On this note James was cautiously optimistic that the tourists will like the new show too, though he worried, “It is a business. If people don’t come we may have to go back to the old show.”

I argued to him that most of the strongest criticism was coming from the older tourists who saw the show twenty or thirty years ago, and that the majority of the audience is younger tourists who have never seen it before. He agreed that there is also a generational shift going on within the audience itself and was confident with their market research which showed that the new drama is more along the lines of what younger audiences want.

Still he was surprised by the vitriolic attacks of completely unconstructive criticism by outsiders. Not that he’s offended or worried about it rather he seems to find it interesting. “I wish I could get inside their heads,” he said.

James told two stories about such attacks. “I was at the top of the house having a conversation with someone when an audience member walked up to me, ‘Excuse me are you the manager?’ she said.

‘Yes.’

‘Would you like some criticism?’

‘Okay.’

‘The show sucks.’ And then she went on this tear about how the show was better thirty years ago.

And I said, ‘Well it must not have been that good if you only saw it once in thirty years.’”

James had to try very hard not to lose his temper and motioned with his hands like rising floodwater to show his temperature rising. In another story his sister Margie, the concession stand manager, got an earful.

John told the same story, “She was like, ‘Well if you don’t like it then leave.’ Awesome. Not the best way to handle it, but it was still awesome.”

* * *

Busy day at work today. Linda is out and it’s payday so I have my usual tasks like helping with cast housing plus her tasks: answering the phones, handing out checks, directing the flow of traffic and information. It’s starting to dawn on me that I have a privileged perspective working both in the office and in the cast. One of the youngest child actors shows

looking for her dad who was in Bo's language class. He's left now and she's using my phone to get a ride. We hang out until somebody comes for her. Jason, one of the AIDT dancers, stops by and teases her while I make her a paper crane.

"How did you get here?"

"Rode my bike."

"From where?"

"My house."

"Where's your house?"

"I don't know." The whole time she stood smiling broadly with her hands tucked behind her back, twisting slightly as if blowing in some imaginary breeze. Angelic.

Those two leave and a fax comes in. I hand out more paychecks and the girl's dad, Dane, arrives with Yo-yo, one of the musicians. "What's up big dog?" We bump fists. Not only is his daughter gone but one of his paychecks is missing. He's expecting two: one for work in the costume shop and another for being in the cast. I act as intermediary between him and payroll.

James tells me he's going to lunch. John comes in and does not realize he's already missed a meeting with Sysco. Cat, the technical director, picks up the unclaimed checks and I answer the phone some more. John and Luzene talk about our ticketing system, which has been double booking seats. John and I talk a bit about the sorry state of the theater's plumbing and I take a call from the Village regarding a costumer who needs a fax (the Village has no fax). Doug and Leah come in looking for their checks, which are already gone

to Cat. Not wanting to leave empty-handed Doug asked for his mail, which I had not had the time to go pick up yet. I gave him the post office box key and send him on the errand.

Cochise, the male lead, comes in to get tickets for a friend and borrows my computer to do a little emailing. John and James return together cursing our IT-company and we commiserate in our collective computer problems. Chelsea comes in and tells a story about a call she took.

“I answered the phone and they said, ‘I need to talk to with someone about the drama right now.’

So I said, ‘Uh, well, I guess you could talk to me.’

‘It was terrible.’

And I said, ‘Sorry you feel that way’ and hung up.’”

Apparently James had to have a talk with her about hanging up on people. But she’s the accountant, why should she have to deal with disgruntled audience members? It seems no one in this office is immune. I answer the phone some more while packing envelopes – brochures to one customer, a DVD to another.

When James returns he asks when I expect the FedEx delivery to come.

“They’re usually here by two,” I remind him.

He jokes, “You’ll be able to run CHA after this summer.”

“That’s what I’ve been thinking,” I smile back.

“I’d be happy to hand it off to you.”

* * *

Under the old regime pay scales were a persistent problem. During the classic drama's long run labor was visibly drawn along racial lines with the lead dancing and acting roles typically going to non-Indians. Because those lead performers were more valuable and highly trained they commanded higher paychecks and this fomented resentment among some Cherokee who were typically paid less. True they were on the stage less, yet the sentiment was that people should be paid equally.

Interestingly this conflict persisted under Cherokee management. At the office different individuals in the cast and crew were constantly coming in to talk to James about the pay scales, which they perceived as unfair. In fact this started as early as the first paycheck during rehearsal.

It's true that there have been errors with the payroll system including incorrect hour counts, missing checks, and even bounced checks. However there is little transparency on this issue, communication remains poor between the CHA management and the performers and production staff. But I cannot think of another job I have had where people are so eager to compare paychecks. Sometimes it seems to me that Cherokee are most pleased when no one is held higher than anyone else. If there were some way to present the rationale behind the tiered pay scale to the Cherokee in their own terms it might help quell the discontent. It seems significant to me but I do not think that is the case with management. When I bring it up I am told that Cherokee will complain and argue about anything, and this is just one more thing.

* * *

One of our favorite pastimes around the office is diagnosing the ire and malcontent directed towards the new drama. I proposed one interpretation, that people who are coming to the show and not liking it are being given false expectations because the *Unto These Hills* name is still there. I asked James whether he ever had second thoughts about keeping that name. In fact this had already occurred to him. In retrospect, he said he would have chosen to make a more complete break with the old show. Our current show was the result of a process that began with an earlier idea of just tweaking the script while updating the costumes, staging, choreography and music. However once the CHA set about trying to correct the inaccuracies of the old show it became clear that the script was a wreck and a more substantial overhaul was needed. This would have been the chance to close the old show and open a new one, but they went with the rewrite instead. Primarily they kept the drama's name, adding only "...a Retelling" to keep brand recognition. It may be a minor issue to some that expectations are raised by the old name because James is convinced that the majority of dissenters had their minds made up not to like the show ahead of time.

Using my hypothesis as a spring-board James went onto propose a new sophisticated theoretical explanation right from the pages of history and memory studies. "When people come in having not seen the show in twenty or thirty years they remember liking the show," he began. "But are they really remembering the show or are they truly appreciating the good feelings they had being there with their families in the audience? When the new show replaces the old one it's like we're saying something bad about their families."

Complicating this interpretation James insists that when people say they prefer the old show what they prefer is a White representation of Cherokee. Indians representing themselves is apparently harder to swallow. While for the Cherokee the new drama is a

vision of their future, some tourists contest that based on their memories of what the reservation was like in the past.

* * *

A boring day at work. “Gawd, it’s so quiet,” Linda says.

“I was thinking we should play a little music,” I said. We laughed. I have done entirely too much goofing off on the internet so I close down my computer, take out my field journal, and start writing long hand – my preferred creative format. It seems I never have time to write when things need to get written and when things are dull my brain is in a lurch, I stare into space and do nothing.

A thunderstorm blew in but it never really rained.

* * *

Board member Reuben Teesetuskie was in the office today and told us how he was at the top of the house and heard people complaining. His take on the situation was that people were apprehensive because it was Indians on stage telling the story themselves instead of “college kids,” which is what they had come to expect from the old show.

James agreed, “I think a lot of it is cultural.” Meaning that a major reason why some of the older customers do not like the new show is that they come with preset expectations about what Indians are. Expectations not only informed by Hollywood Westerns and popular culture stereotypes but informed by the old show as well. There is a struggle for power over the control of representations playing out in the criticism of *Unto These Hills ...a Retelling*.

James went on to tell us that some Council members have told him that locals and tribal members are now complaining directly to them about the show. But James is cynical about whether the Council is on his side or not, “What are you telling them? Are you sending them over here so that we can answer their questions?” He reflected on the situation and muttered to himself, “I’m just going to have to write a letter to The One Feather to squelch this.” James is convinced that the locals who are complaining are, “the ones who complain about everything,” and worse the ones that will never lift a finger to help but only want to talk. “People say they hate it and that everyone around them in the audience hated it. Well then who’s giving all these standing ovations?”

He paused and reflected on the success of the new pre-show. “Paula is up there giving them a language lesson and the audience is singing ‘Shi-Oh’ back to her,” he smiled. “They’re having a cultural experience, they’re going to come away with something. ‘We learned to say hello in Cherokee.’”

Then he left for a quick coffee at Lift next door, but did not come back until forty minutes later. He sighed, “I need to stop going out into public.”

In our office we make a conscious effort to remain positive in the light of all the criticism, in part because we are certain that we are in the right.

Luzene takes a heated call from someone wanting their money back because they did not like the show. Linda and I sat quietly listening to her deal with the problem customer. She had a heck of time getting him off the phone and when she was done the whole box office broke out into laughter and applause. She came out to tell us the story.

“So this old guy called. He kept referring to his age and the age of his group over and over again. That they were all on social security and that the rain made them uncomfortable. He told me they found the show ‘disgusting’ and that he was prepared to write letters to the newspaper telling everyone how horrible the show is. But if we would only give him his money back he wouldn’t tell anyone just how bad it was.”

Apparently this person had brought a church group up from Augusta, Georgia, and went on and on about all the money they had spent on gas and motels. We all wondered why he felt it necessary to mention that the trip was church related and why he had to keep repeating his age. Luzene said the caller gave no indication what was so “disgusting” about the show but we all agreed that it was a bit of a stretch to find anything offensive in it. This customer confirmed our understanding of our detractors – namely that it is the older individuals who enjoy the show the least.

To my knowledge this was the first time anyone called trying to get their money back. John had come down to hear Luzene’s story and he shared one experience when he was at the theater and actually had to give money back to a group because they were so aggressive. John said he tried every trick in the book to get them to calm down but for whatever reason, he did not get too specific, he refunded them in order to get them to leave. One woman in the group had called him “stupid” and later her husband came up to him and apologized for her behavior. On another occasion when they had to cancel the show for rain just after it had started he was accosted by a customer claiming that they had shown just enough of the show to give out rain checks instead of refunds. When he responded that his first interest was public safety she called him a “liar.”

John went on to say that the people who do not like the show, “are not nice people.”

Luzene agreed, “It’s like we’ve done something to insult them personally.” This is in keeping with the theme of ownership, that by rewriting *Unto These Hills* the Cherokee have stolen their play, like it was about them to begin with. In a funny way the classic drama is about the White audience in the sense that it was an exercise in White self-definition through the act of representing the Other.

* * *

James and I are debating the root causes of the storm of criticism the drama is currently enduring.

“Control of the drama has shifted,” I reasoned, “And part of the reason why some people are so unhappy with it is because they are, in effect, no longer in control. No longer in that position of deciding Tsali’s heroic status.”

“Yes. But I don’t understand why that’s not obvious to outsiders,” he fumed.

Maybe it’s their status as outsiders that is not entirely obvious, I thought to myself but kept quiet.

He continued berating our critics saying, “You’re missing the point. You’re missing our achievement in taking over the drama and putting Indians on stage.” When it comes to the persistence of Whites knowing what’s best for Cherokee – you know what those Cherokee should do, blah, blah, blah – he spits, “This is getting stupid. And besides what’s people’s obsession with this show?”

“Maybe this is miscommunication,” I suggested. “Like going to a museum and seeing a piece of abstract art and saying, ‘This is crap. My kid could paint this.’”

James took to that analogy right away. “But I don’t tell the museum what art to show. I’ve seen Broadway shows I didn’t like, like *The Lion King*. But I don’t feel like I own the show. I don’t ask for my money back or call the theater to berate the staff or threaten or write angry letters.” There is some excess, something left over that is prompting some customers to take an additional step, to lay claim to the show itself regardless of the intentions of the Cherokee people. There is a vehemence coming from our detractors that demonstrates they are taking the drama’s changes on a very personal and intimate level.

James imagines the new show as playing an important role in educating people as to who the Cherokee are. In this regard the classic drama has been like a colossal disinformation campaign. Our audiences, both Cherokee and tourist, have absorbed their history from the classic show and now are rejecting the new show because it does not match that knowledge. By claiming that the new show is more historically “accurate” other versions get labeled as “wrong,” thus insulting the people who subscribe to them.

This very scenario played out at the top of the house one night when James was confronted by a White woman who, when he made that same point, said, “So what you’re telling me is that everything I’ve learned from this show over the years is wrong?” Similarly he relayed that while dining at a local restaurant tribal members had publicly chastised him for overstepping his bounds. Basically, James said, they held that he did not know what he was talking about. This just exasperated him further.

“We did this in consultation with tribal elders. Do you think we’d just slap something together and put it on stage? Read a book and talk to your elders.”

Hanay had backed him up on this, James said, “He told me, ‘You’ve got to do this.’” That it is necessary to rip people away from the mythic Indian as Whites represented them and to bring Indian people back to themselves.

“Often it is the artists of a community that are called upon to invent these challenges,” I told him. I feel like James needs affirmations to persevere in the face of the hostile response to the new drama.

Later that day the shit really hit the fan when this one crazy truck driver came to town. In his trailer was a load of huge robotic light enclosures that weighed about 400 pounds each and I guess he was having a bad or was running late and simply refused to take to them up the Hill to the theater. Instead he dropped his load across the street from our business office in the fairgrounds parking lot, John cursing him the whole time, nearly coming to blows. Once the cargo was out of the trailer the trucker sped away. I ran across the street to our offices where I found the phone number for the driver’s boss, James started making calls to get a forklift. I told the lighting and electrical guys to bring their dump truck, then I called Reuben who had been moonlighting as a tow-truck driver and asked him to bring his rollback truck. Finally it was my job to sit in the parking lot guarding half a dozen wooden crates. They were about three foot by three foot by six foot. Justin showed with the dump truck, completely befuddled by the problem. Then seemingly from out of nowhere an enormous construction-site sized forklift appeared from behind the Museum.

“Where’d that thing come from?” Justin said, aghast.

“Boys Club,” I replied.

“What’s the Boys Club doing with a forklift?”

“It’s not that kind of Boys Club.”

“What is it then?”

July

I answered a call to today from a gentleman at Florida State University who wanted to buy a Cherokee headdress. “It’s got to be authentic,” he said.

This was too much! The FSU Seminoles want a Cherokee headdress. So I said to him, “What did you have in mind?”

He wanted, “a big long one. Like what the chief would wear.” I could just imagine some professor or dean hanging it up in his office.

“You mean a feather headdress?”

“Yes, that’s the thing,” he said.

So I explained to him that the Cherokee never wore such things, that they came from a Great Plains tradition. “We don’t sell anything of the sort, but maybe someone in town does,” and I gave him the number of the visitor’s center, which he was very grateful for.

Later when I told that story to my wife, she would say, “He should have called the Florida Seminoles and asked them for an authentic Seminole headdress.” A good point. Why

did this guy call Cherokee? Perhaps he came here as a tourist once and had a memory of the roadside chiefs?

I told the story again in dressing room to Keaw'e and Jason. Keaw'e was extremely disappointed, shaking his head solemnly, "He could get one at a tourist shop, for children," referring to the brightly colored pink, yellow, and blue trinkets sold as souvenirs for little kids. Jason, the cast's consummate prankster, had something else in mind.

"You should have gone out and gotten him one and sold it to him at double the price." We all laughed. "Anyone like that would deserve it."

In retrospect Jason's plan would have been simple to execute, but rather than manipulate an embarrassing situation to my own financial advantage I fell back on my authority as an expert, which is kind of funny in itself. I guess we were both thinking of a way to teach him a lesson.

* * *

Linda took another call from a tourist who could not remember the name of the pre-show flutist, though he remembered him introduced as an Apache. He wanted to buy a copy of his CD. Linda told him his name was Andy Vasquez, even spelling his last name for him.

"Vasquez? That's a funny name for an Apache," the caller told her. Linda was stunned. "I'm sorry," he laughed, "I bet his middle name is White Buffalo or something like that."

Next she showed me a letter we received from a patron who liked the show, something our office always appreciates. Only the writer singled out the acting by our female lead, “the Chief’s squaw,” which he found especially impressive.

Linda cried, “Don’t they know that’s a slur?”

* * *

This afternoon John and James were talking about Scott Parker, director of the Institute of Outdoor Drama, who came out to see the show last week. The big story is the box office success, up 30% over 2004. Since outdoor drama box offices are down across the country and since *Unto These Hills* is a huge name all the other theaters are paying attention to the steps CHA takes. “The whole country is watching you,” Scott said.

But James cautioned, “We’re a unique case because we have the means to pump three million into the new show. And a big part of that has been one million for the advertising cooperative.” James relayed Scott’s description of two other scenarios. One strategy being followed by *Tecumseh!* of Chillicothe, Ohio, was to wait it out until box office sales simply come around.

“They’re doing the exact same show, same as they always have,” James said shaking his head. “The outdoor drama is basically a dated art form. It’s a 1950s art form and people come to see it out of nostalgia, like a drive-in movie.

‘Remember when we used to go to the drive-in? Wasn’t it fun?’

‘Do you want to go again?’

‘Nah, let’s go to the theater with stadium seating.’”

The other scenario Scott offered was being followed by *The Lost Colony* of Manteo, North Carolina, which featured a few weeks with Lynn Redgrave as Queen Elizabeth and saw a bounce in their box office during her appearance. So next year they are planning on having “stars” on different occasions to lure people back. James rejected this too, “Then people aren’t making a connection with the story you have to tell. They’re coming to see Lynn Redgrave. And who’s going to come on the weeks when she’s off?” Considering the price they paid in salaries and in dealing with diva personalities James could not fathom having bigger stars, “Can you imagine? With the problems we’ve had with this cast!” He shook his head emphatically.

Scott had then asked if there was anything other dramas could take away from the CHA’s experiment. James said, “I’ll tell you what I won’t do again. I won’t have this cross-country affair with the director in California and the set designer in New York and the production manager in Oklahoma. If people want to come to Cherokee and be at our disposal fine.” It was too hard this year trying to coordinate schedules and communicate with everyone.

Then James and John traded information on a number of other outdoor dramas that had tried new scripts only to find that locals hated them and forced the theaters to go back the old shows.

August

Linda had a good story to tell this morning. She took a call from a woman in Maggie Valley who did not like the new show but was very polite and intelligent in her rationale.

“She said, ‘I wanted to write a letter, but I didn’t want it to come off as irate or criticizing, so I thought I’d just call.’” Linda went on to say that this person had seen the drama every year since 1975 and cried every time. “‘What my people did to your people was so horrible. The Trail of Tears is so important.’”

Altering the melodramatic tragedy of the drama’s finale has been a major sticking point to some tourists who come wanting a tearjerker. Linda explained to her that the purpose of the new ending was to end on an uplifting note, to show that the Cherokee are here and thriving.

“She said, ‘I’m so appreciative of the work you all have done,’ but she still preferred the old one.” Linda reasoned that this was a person, “who wanted to be reminded” of the Trail of Tears. The caller had said that she felt like those characters were her friends. She had even attended the funeral of some cast members when they passed.

* * *

Linda took a call from someone who thought the show was “amateurish.” He told her, “you’ve lasted fifty-seven years but you’ll never make it to sixty with this show.” He had gone on about how everyone he talked to said they did not like the show either, even the cleaning ladies at his motel. I guess people do not like to be alone in their misery so if others complain too they feel more comfortable in the crowd. Invoking the venerable age of the CHA as an institution serves to underscores the dire consequences of our actions.

Shortly thereafter, Yona came downstairs having taken a call from a woman whom Linda had also spoken to and described as “strange” and “confused” because she had mailed the CHA a letter addressed to Hanay and then had gotten upset because we had forwarded the

letter to him. To hear Yona describe it she apparently wanted to hire the cast to perform for her in South Carolina even though she had never seen the show. Linda described her as someone who does not listen or only selectively listens. Yona said she would “spin” everything he said and was very aggressive and rude. Linda said this person was astonished to learn that the cast members all had jobs outside of performing. Yona said she self-identified as Cherokee and was outraged to learn that some cast members were not Cherokee. She was so frustrated, he said, that she threatened to write a letter to the Chief.

The more Yona talked to her the more upset she became especially at the notion that non-Cherokee Indians were in the show. He told her that they were looking to hire people, “like in summer stock,” people with experience and credentials that could “raise the professionalism of the show.”

This only seemed to infuriate her more, the notion that the CHA was motivated to be professional and hence make money. “You mean you’re not uplifting the Cherokee?” she demanded of him.

Yona shrugged, “What am I supposed to say to that? That the Creator spoke to me? That I saw spirits? I am completely at a loss when people ask questions like that. I don’t eat dirt. I live in a house. I wear shoes. And it makes me look like I’m off my game because I can’t answer. It’s like asking an African-American, ‘What do Black people think about...’ I don’t know everyone on this reservation. I don’t know what they’re thinking. She said she’s going to call back to speak with our executive direction about ‘the mission of our organization.’”

* * *

It was so slow today, hardly any phone calls or walk-ups. Linda put on the radio so we could at least have some background noise. Two rooms over and we could still hear the old punch clock pegging away the minutes. Yona came down from his office to start a conversation and alleviate our mutual boredom. He took off on another of his reminiscences about how the reservation used to be when he was growing up. I learned that where the Welcome Center is now used to be a grocery store with a meat counter and kitchen. Every day at lunch all the guys at “The Cherokees” workshop would file across the bridge to the grocery.

Yona grew up in Birdtown and recalled how his grandmother lived across a one-lane bridge. He and his kin would walk over to Jenkins Grocery and get thick bologna slices. Then they would eat them all before they even got back to the bridge. The only supermarket back then was the IGA, which Yona called “The Red and White.” He said, “Everyone shopped at the grocery stores in their own little community.”

Yona has also been taking a lot of complaint calls and responding to letters and email. He told us he spoke with one man who hated the new drama and wanted the old one back. The caller said he understood the need for Cherokee to produce a more “authentic” play and asked, “Why couldn’t you have fixed the old one instead of making a new one?” Yona explained to him that there were too many things wrong with the classic drama to simply be replaced with correct information. How the story of Tsali, the death of his wife, his capture and execution was just a myth.

“Silence,” Yona said.

So then the caller went on to complain about the dances in the new drama such as the hoedown, which many of our detractors have singled out as irrelevant. This puzzles me

because the classic drama also had a hoedown. Why critique the hoedown in the new play and say, “Go back to the old show,” when the old show had a hoedown? This seems to reinforce our perception that our staunchest critics base their comparison of the old and new shows upon selective memories. Yona went on to explain to the caller how the old show did not really have Cherokee dances but that all those numbers were basically modified ballet moves. What are in the new show are actual Cherokee dances.

“Silence,” Yona said.

Exasperated Yona throws his hands into the air. “What am I supposed to say? I don’t eat dirt. I live in a house. I wear shoes.”

September

The Tuesday after Labor Day there was an irate message on Linda’s voice mail. “For Christ’s sake!” the woman yelled, “I’ve been to every extension and no one will answer the friggin’ phone! It’s 10 am on Saturday and I know you’re in there.”

“You could tell from her voice that she was from somewhere up north,” Linda said, “Probably New Jersey.”

We thought it odd that the caller seemed to think that the staff was intentionally avoiding her and that it would not occur to her that the business office would be closed on a Saturday. But then, it is probably equally strange to some city folk that you can run a tourist attraction with banker’s hours on the reservation. It got me thinking about our hate mail – obviously this person had not yet seen our attractions but still found a way to hate – and the experience of stressful vacations. The kids are rotten, the spouses are fighting, and bad

experiences pile up and people get caught in the negativity of the moment and their dashed expectations.

In addition to cast members complaining about their pay rates there have been a lot of errors too. Stephanie, one of the Clan Spirits, came in and said she cashed her paycheck then it bounced and her bank issued her a twenty-five dollar fee. One of the child actor's checks disappeared altogether and had to be reissued. Other cast members did not come in for their final paycheck and called to ask why it is taking so long receive it in the mail. On payday John called Chelsea from Linda's desk to tell her his paycheck had an error winking at us as he grinned. We all laughed at his parody.

Backstage at the Mountainside: The Labor of Performing Cultural Difference

In crafting one's prose, as in going about one's fieldwork, it is always permissible – and sometimes highly informative – to smile and even to laugh.

Keith Basso (1996:111)

From all appearances the Qualla Boundary has a negative unemployment rate in the peak summer months with more jobs available than there are people to fill them. According to the North Carolina Employment Security Commission, Jackson County, which the Qualla Boundary partially overlaps, has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the state at 2.6%. To compensate for this labor shortage the Cherokee economy relies on immigrant labor. Many of the employees in the Cherokee tourist economy making beds, cooking breakfast, and cleaning rooms are immigrants from Mexico and Central America. Also represented in the reservation workforce are men and women from Eastern Europe, the Caribbean, and East Asia. Significantly these are service jobs which may occur behind the scenes, while at the drama, the tribe's most visible public face to the non-Cherokee world, immigrant labor is nonexistent.

The pressing need for labor on the reservation affected my experience of conducting field research too, as the Cherokees and local non-Indians whom I pursued as interview subjects were all exceedingly busy. In fact this would become one of the defining features of working in the new drama in 2006. Since most non-retired adults in the cast and crew had day jobs, sometimes even multiple jobs, there emerged a point of conflict between the

Cherokee and the American Indians of other tribes brought in as the show's production staff. There was the perception among some of these professional performers that some of the Cherokees were less than wholly committed to the drama. For the Cherokees, however, their commitment to the drama was always balanced between multiple obligations including day jobs and families, which the professional performers and production staff did not have to contend with. Another wrinkle was added by the many youth who were cast in the play as the start of rehearsals and the final week of the drama's run overlapped with the school year. In the lead up to the drama's debut, actors' day jobs and family commitments were constantly interfering with scheduled rehearsal times. I know this was true for me and I worked for the CHA which managed the show yet I was still unable to make every rehearsal. I clearly recall one instance where I was tasked with a job concerning the cast housing by John, our theater manager. That afternoon we met at the top of the house so that I could give him an update on my progress. There from our position at the theater's entrance we could see the rehearsals going on below.

"Hmmm. I think I'm in this scene," I murmured while John laughed in sympathy. It was something of a postmodern moment for me because at a time when I was supposed to be in the thick of things participating and performing I was removed and observing; and ironically commenting on being removed and observing. John probably did not see the situation the same way. For him it was more likely indicative of the scale of our project: too much work needed to be done in the amount of time we had to do it.

One reason for this tight schedule was that the drama did not get off to a timely start. In the CHA office we received a trickle of Cherokee men and women early in the spring who had worked at the theater in seasons past. They came ready to be put back to work but before

we were ready to take them. As the days passed their concerns escalated into worry and Linda, CHA's executive assistant, took to speaking with the workers directly.

"Cuttin' kind of close this year," one man said.

Another reminded us "We's ready to go to work up there."

A third explained, "See the way we did it in the past was we'd be workin' by now."

Then a fourth fretted, "You hear rumors, they're saying they're just going to close it down."

Linda was a little confused and annoyed as she tried to explain our situation to each one who came in, but sometimes it was to no avail. Of one of those men she said, "He didn't seem to understand the point that we're doing things all different this year. He didn't seem to get that."

Instead of recognizing that we were doing things differently many of the drama's old Cherokee employees, the concession stand workers and ushers, came to the office as if their previous experience guaranteed them a summer job. However the new management felt that only the workers with satisfactory job performance should be rehired. This fed into anxiety among locals that things were not happening according to schedule and rumors circulated that there would be no drama. There was a general sense that things-are-going-to-be-different but Cherokees outside the CHA did not have a clear idea as to what that meant. Class differences separating those who worked in the office from those who were service workers at the theater also seemed to influence whether people even felt comfortable asking about it.

Preseason Anxiety and Conflict

It is early morning and John and I are at the theater inventorying the souvenir t-shirts that will be put on display at the gift shop. A large number of size small t-shirts are missing and we wonder to ourselves whether a former employee had helped themselves to the goods. Once we had finished our chore John took me on a tour of the theater and backstage, pointing out everything that was in need of repair along the way. Two of the concession stands are not set up to handle long lines and one is completely disgusting on the interior with the leaky roof. Lyme stalactites dangled down where the water was leaching through.

“Unappetizing, to say the least,” John said. This particular concession stand needed to be shut down. The bathrooms were cramped and without handicap access. It is hard to imagine how this place could have ever served thousands of people. Then as if nature herself were against us, John noted that the hemlocks have blight.

John shook his head in disbelief at the monumental task before him, “Time is slipping rapidly away from us.”

Val and Polly, John’s wife and baby girl, showed as we were on our tour and came over to chat with us. Val teaches at a youth performance academy in Sylva called Triple Threat and is an experienced stage performer. I asked her about the sand stage. “It looks cool, it blends with the natural environment,” she said. “But I can’t imagine performing on it. It is difficult to move on as an actor, much less a dancer.”

A conventional stage would be more versatile and allow Mountainside Theater to be used for more than just *Unto These Hills*. “You could paint a stage to look like whatever you want,” John mused. He envisions a day when the theater could even host touring acts and the

resident cast could perform multiple shows in a summer rather than having a huge structure dedicated to the performance of only one show.

Then there are the problems with the seats, which were built on top of dirt without concrete foundations. The result is that over the years rain has washed under the seating making the brick surfaces uneven and pitching some rows of chairs forward into an uncomfortable angle. The walkway by the third and newest concession stand had not fared any better. The brick paving undulates in a wave where the earth underneath is being swept away, their only buttress some puny locust logs set into the hill. Because of the major investment in such a project the CHA would not replace the seating and brickwork until the 2009 season.

We went down to the stage next. John likes the sand but, “I’m not married to it either.” Hanay requested a real stage but it is not possible to build one this year. Cresting over the stage is a huge two foot by two foot black metal truss which supports a large speaker array in the center, not in stereo. John hates the truss, not only is it ugly but it dissociates the sound from the action on stage. No matter what is happening in the play the audience hears audio from the center only. The truss is an artifact from 2004 making it was one of the final lasting acts of the old regime of the CHA and it was quickly recognized as obsolete, a state of the art surround sound system would be installed for the 2006 show.

“It kills me. You have this beautiful outdoor setting and you put a big black truss in the middle of it.”

We explored the backstage and came upon a whiteboard where the old cast had written farewells. The theater has backstage problems too, many of them caused by water. John boasted that there was creek coming out from under the stage and he opened a trap door

to prove he was right. It revealed a stream of water percolating out of the mountain draining into the ravine. A bridge of solid construction spans the ravine and connects the backstage and wings, a complex called the round, with the dressing rooms, showers, and bathrooms uphill.

From the dressing rooms we walked uphill past the wrecked cabins with their mossy roofs, poison ivy creeping around the back to the sides. According to local legend these buildings arrived in Cherokee from Oak Ridge Laboratories where they housed scientists working on the Manhattan project. A rusted out hibachi grill sat in front of one, a partial sphinx head by another. A third was painted pastel. John said one of these buildings was left unlocked and had a vagrant sleeping in it. Another “smelled like dog piss.” At the edge of the cabins was a wooden platform tucked away in a grotto. “That’s the dance floor,” John explained. “This is where they had parties. You can see the bar back there.” He showed me a corner where he had found an altar to a Barbie doll and other weird stuff. A partial sign remains something about making an offering to the goddess of hope. “I guess Ray cleaned it up,” John said with a shrug, glad to have it gone.

Near the top of the hill is the dining hall which might one day be converted to a dance studio where the cast could train and study under an instructor. The dining hall is one of the younger backstage buildings having been built “to the lowest bidder” after the old one had burned down in a grease fire. The carpet was terribly stained even though it was only a year old. John said it had been ruined by the caterer who, we soon discover, had also left dishes in the sink. We walked on uphill and saw more water damaged buildings and buildings perforated by swarms of industrious carpenter bees. There is a mud wash where there used to be a swimming pool that was lifted out by a flood. At the very top of the hill is an A-frame

house that was traditionally reserved for the director. It still looked like a nice place from the outside but the interior smelled of mildew and the furniture seemed to be about forty years old. In sum the backstage properties have been poorly maintained and John spoke of having to do “triage” on the facilities here while also developing a vision for the future.

As we strolled downhill and back to the theater I imagined what it must have been like to be a young person living and working here. They must have enjoyed the camaraderie and freedom of being in this special hidden place. Lazy Sundays, summer romances, and parties, a lot of parties.

Back at the CHA offices John and I met up with James, who was all too aware of the sorry state of the backstage buildings.

“The boys’ dorm is skanky,” John said.

“That shower is yucky,” replied James. Currently James is trying to solve a problem involving youth from Snowbird, a Cherokee community that lies about fifty miles to the west of and not contiguous with the main body of the reservation. There are young people in Snowbird who are interested in being a part of the drama. Yet if they were to perform at night then James would have to house the minors backstage.

“With professional actors?” John says incredulously. “That’s crazy!”

James wants to get Snowbird involved but people cannot make that commute through winding mountain roads at night and the prospect of housing the children of tribal members backstage frightens him. “It’s a nightmare,” he says.

* * *

As I was getting ready to leave work one day I heard John ranting in his office. He was upset about the in-coming costume designer, Dmitri, a Nez Perce, who was himself upset at the prospect of having to share an apartment with the composer, Dennis, a Seneca.

“Divas!” he exclaimed. However, John feels that he has more pressing issues to address in trying to get the new show off the ground than appeasing the egos of his production staff. The pressure on him is growing and he acknowledged that while they have great resumes he is under too much stress to pretend he cares for their LA and NYC affectations. “There’s fifty hotels in town. You’ve got free. Or get your own room.”

Local impressions of Dennis are very different than those of the other non-Cherokee Indians on the production staff. Tall and thin with a long grey pony tail, Dennis, who gets around town on his bicycle, is humble and genial. His tribal identification with an eastern tribe also conveys an additional cultural capital among some Cherokees that is not granted to members of western tribes and he would become the only non-Cherokee Indian from the 2006 to remain with the production in its future iterations. By contrast some of the other production staff who hail from the great coastal cities seemed uncomfortable and estranged to be on the reservation, a somewhat isolated and out of the way place.

I did not meet Dmitri myself until later the next day. I was eating a muffin and sipping espresso from Lift, having moved to a spare desk so that Dennis could sit at my desk and borrow my laptop to check his email. Dennis and Eddie, an Eastern Band Cherokee, were conversing like old friends when Dmitri entered, impeccably dressed in a black jacket with pink shirt and artfully torn jeans. They proceeded to crack jokes at Dmitri’s expense.

“He has LA style,” Dennis said. “When I met him he was Idaho. Now he’s totally California.”

The two visitors talked with Eddie about the poor state of the backstage housing and the need for towels and bed linens. I told them where the laundry room was located and Dmitri excused himself to tour the costume shop before traveling to WCU where he wanted to recruit some student seamstresses. I asked him his opinions about those old costumes.

“I already went through them all. I was here in February. Anything hokey, I threw them out. Like, I found these buckskin briefs...”

“For the dancers?” Dennis cried in disbelief.

“Yeah. Pfft!” And Dmitri mimed throwing trash over his shoulder.

“You know he kept those for himself,” Dennis joked and we all laughed.

“Yeah, I’m wearing them right now,” Dmitri cooed and made his exit while we were cutting up.

Eddie whipped out a Peter Gabriel CD for Dennis, “Listen to Track Three, it’s just an idea.”

As Dennis told us stories about working with Tony Levin, Peter Gabriel’s bass player, he complained that he needed to hire musicians for the drama. Without Buddy the producer, who was not in town yet, Dennis felt hamstrung. This led to jokes and speculations about the whereabouts of Buddy and Hanay.

“I heard Hanay could be here tomorrow,” I said. “Or Saturday. Or possibly later.”

“Oh man,” Eddie groaned.

“I heard Hanay was going to be the first one here,” Dennis said.

I suggested, “Maybe he’s really busy.”

Dennis just looked disappointed. “The music is all ready to go, but I don’t know how it fits in the show. I could be at home.”

John passed through and the three men swapped stories about how things were coming down to the wire.

“I’ve been telling him this is not film, this is a live performance.”

“He’s used to coming in, running through things five or six million times. You know, ‘Okay, let’s do it one more time.’”

“When’s Buddy coming?”

“Next year.”

“I heard Hanay found a woman to play Selu. When is she coming?”

“June.”

“They’ll helicopter her onto the stage. She’ll be reading her lines on the way over.”

Everyone is tense and frustrated and these kinds of jokes serve to lighten the mood. Other jokes were made at the expense of cast and crew who were accustomed to city life and how they might perceive life on the reservation. For instance, today Dennis found a black snake sunning itself by the A-frame house. What will the city Indians think when they find reptiles in the place of Starbucks and wi-fi?

Hanay did arrive that weekend and proceeded to defuse the hubbub around his tardiness. When Bo, a member of the Board of Trustees, expressed his concern to him, Hanay was all confidence. “You don’t want to have too much time. Especially with Indians, you know. A month is plenty of time. Singing and dancing and everything. It’ll take the lighting people about a week. The sound people about the same. It’s all on schedule.”

I was curious as to how he would find life on the reservation now that the conveniences of LA were out of reach. He seemed genuinely pleased, “You don’t hear any honking. You don’t hear any sirens, screaming.”

* * *

Now that the production staff has arrived the pace around the office has stepped up considerably. One morning my first task was to unlock the dressing rooms for the VOC, Vocational Opportunities of Cherokee, who had been contracted out to in order to clean the place up. Only no one knew which keys unlocked which doors so I had no choice but to go to the back stage with a quart sized bucket full of random keys and solve the problem by trial and error. The VOC workers were already there, three men and one woman, smoking and talking.

I greeted them with, “What’s up guys?” and to my surprise they immediately queried me on what the job would entail. I did not have access to any special information. I was not given instructions to pass on to the VOC. I’m just the guy with a bucket of keys. Nevertheless they were looking at me expectantly so I mustered a response, “Well, I imagine they’ll expect you to clean ‘em.”

The four workers crowded around me as one key failed after another. “Ya’ll can hang out for a bit,” I said. “I don’t know which key opens the door.” I got one door open and we filed in. I stumbled around looking for a switch and finally flipped on the light. Somebody let out a low whistle at the sight, no doubt impressed with the combination of dingy grime and complete disarray. Since I was hoping to avoid the embarrassment of more fiddling with random keys I went through the shared bathrooms to open each of the remaining doors from the inside. I came out the last door and nearly bowled into Dmitri which was a huge relief. At least then I could be sure that the VOC workers got good instructions.

“Hey man, the cleaning crew is here.”

“Awesome. What are they going to clean? Everything?”

“Well you’re the man in charge. You should explain to them what needs to be done.”

Dmitri, curious, went from one room to the next turning on the lights and inspecting their contents. One room was wigs and make up. Another had costumes on racks and the floor strewn with wood chips. One of the cleaners sighed loudly while another asked why the floor was covered in chips.

“It’s for the rats,” Dmitri explained.

“For what? To live in?” the one female worked deadpanned. Then she looked at me and said, “Are you cleaning?”

“No,” I said with a smile and when she was just about to smile back I joked, “You were going to make me sweep it up!”

“You were going to be my rat,” she smiled big and we laughed together.

This was the first time I had seen the interiors of the backstage dressing rooms and I thought they were bizarre and fascinating. Graffiti covered the walls, fabrics and forms were strewn about. A beefcake pin-up was taped to a mini-fridge.

Shortly thereafter John arrived and he had a self-conscious moment, “You haven’t done drama before. All this must seem so strange to you.” He asked me to open up all the remaining doors and each mess seemed to dishearten the cleaning crew more. We inspected the bathrooms, the water was on in all of the sinks but one but the lights would not come on in the showers. John fiddled with the breaker box which housed huge glass fuses that looked like medicine bottles until he found the one that brought the shower lights on.

* * *

Frequently John and James will take time out of their day to vent in the presence of sympathetic office staff. Both are frustrated with the strong personalities they hired to shepherd the new drama.

Upon giving one principle performer a ride to Cherokee from the Asheville airport, John was immediately embattled with, “a total diva.” In a mocking, snotty voice he mimed her for us, “Well, I better have cable and a phone. I was promised cable and a phone. It’s too dark here, there are no street lights. What am I supposed to do? What do you expect me to do?”

John cursed Buddy, saying that handling cast housing was his responsibility. “I’ve never been spoken to like that before. She talked to me like I was a dog.” He continued his rant complaining that the show could have been done with college students for a fraction of the cost and they would be dying to get in the company housing. No other outdoor drama offers cast housing except for *Tecumseh!* which, he said, only provides wood floored box tents. At Theater West Virginia where John first learned the business of outdoor drama, they did nothing more than help cast find apartments to rent. In addition to free housing, *Unto These Hills* is one of the highest paying outdoor dramas, but what really irked him was that housing was free. John, the consummate businessman and penny-pincher, could not believe that someone would pass up such a deal.

At another date James gave us a similar story. “I just got out of a production meeting,” he sighed dramatically. “Whine and bitch and moan and complain. No wonder the CHA hired the people that they did. They were happy to have a job and a place to stay.

Hanay is pissed. Buddy is pissed. Hanay blames Buddy and on and on.” James feels that all these emotions and diva personalities are weighing down the CHA’s ability to prepare adequately for the new show.

He continued by taking shots at yet another member of the staff. “She was so snotty. Saying, ‘You can’t expect people of our caliber to stay in this housing.’ And then she stayed at a hotel last night and sent Buddy the receipt. I told Buddy, ‘We’re not paying for that.’ I have an email from her saying, ‘If I don’t like the housing I’ll get a hotel and pay for it myself.’ She was saying snotty comments to me like, ‘How can I bring sheets when you didn’t even tell me what size the bed is?’”

Here James paused for dramatic effect.

“I’m sorry. I’ve had a little more important things to deal with than your bed sheets,” he gushed. “Like getting funding for the entire show. All this was Buddy’s responsibility. He had the cast housing list weeks ago. I told her, ‘You need to take this up with Hanay and Buddy.’” Finally James declared, “I’m so sick of it!”

* * *

In the weeks leading up to audition and rehearsal my day to day struggles had less to do with heated production meetings than with dealing with the phone company. The first problem was the pay phones: James thought they were off, but John thought they were on. It was up to me to hike up the theater and pick up each of the pay phone receivers and listen for the dial tone. I found that one was on, three were off. Back at the office I called the service provider to get the remaining phones switched on only to learn they needed the individual street addresses. So back up the hill I went to carefully read the address labels on each of the

pay phones. After lunch I had to call the repair department about a buzz in Hanay's line and then to the accounts department to get phones turned on for four backstage apartments. After being on hold for an eternity the phone company was beyond clueless, telling me that there were no phone lines at the street address I provided, nor were there any phone lines registered to the CHA. As it turned out they were all registered to "Unto These Hills." With resolve I went to the director's A-frame and called the phone company from there, reasoning they could not tell me the house I was calling from did not exist. I honestly do not remember if the phone company ever fixed this problem or if Hanay simply took mercy on me and quit asking for it to be fixed.

A "Major Problem" with the Classic Drama

Although there is ample evidence in the CHA archives that the old regime wanted the drama to star Cherokee actors, from 1950 to 2005 the vast majority of lead roles went to White actors who would perform in full body make-up. Principle auditions were not held locally, but in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, about 270 miles to the east of Cherokee, or at a handful of summer stock auditions where multiple outdoor dramas and other production companies would gather to preview talent. My fieldwork showed that this practice of casting the drama with trained non-Indians actors was a major point of contention between the CHA and tribal members. In fact a plurality of Cherokees I spoke with felt that this was a more pressing issue than even the historical and cultural inaccuracies in the classic drama itself. Those tribal members who were not on stage as extras tended to be ushers or work in the concession stands, while non-Indians tended to perform on stage in the principle roles and

provide leadership for the production. There was an ideology of paternalism at work in which the Indians were supposed to be trained to take the performance leads with the non-Indians cast and crew being phased out over time. This never came to pass. Even those Cherokees who were interested in playing a leading role in the drama found themselves barred from advancing beyond a few token roles set aside for tribal members.

In interview many Cherokees recalled with frustration how the CHA privileged non-Indian performers over locals. Retired computer programmer Lloyd Arneach reflected on his participation in the drama in the early 1960s saying, “They assigned roles, year after year. I was told, ‘No that role is taken.’ That’s when I realized we didn’t have a shot at the major roles.”

James Bradley, who during the late 1980s and early 1990s became the only Cherokee ever to have danced the lead position in the show stopping Eagle Dance said, “It’s just so much easier to hire back the same people every year... I just think a lot of CHA’s problem was complacency. ‘Eh, so-and-so has done it for years, let’s let them do it.’”

World champion hoop dancer Eddie Swimmer was also in the drama in his youth, he saw complacency on both sides, “As for our people not getting the parts, okay yeah, we weren’t trained in the theater... But they could also train as we came along, picked up people who they saw potential and used it... I think on the other hand, we sort of let it happen too. We haven’t stepped up to say ‘Hey you haven’t trained our people.’”

James also mentioned something along these lines, “I just think that they got complacent, ‘Well our people don’t have the talent. Well, they won’t show up for work,’ which is something I heard all the time from the other cast. ‘We’ll never be able to do a show

because these people will never come to work.’ Well if we give them something to do that’s more important than standing by a tree every night I think they probably will.”

While the CHA projected a policy of intending to mold talented Cherokees into the kind of actors that could take lead roles in the drama in practice the locals were typically cast in minor roles. Some participants remained in those roles for years, decades even, and were continually passed over for advancement into bigger roles. Over the course of more than fifty-five years, with few exceptions, the Cherokees were mostly extras in their own play.

Cherokee Casting Call

The 2006 auditions were a landmark event in the tribe’s effort to assert sovereignty over the drama and the way it represents their people to the tourist public. Auditions for the 2006 production of *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* would begin in Cherokee, North Carolina, with the goal of casting locals as the stars of their own show. The auditions were broken up over two days, the first was in the evening at Cherokee’s coffeehouse-*cum*-contemporary art gallery, Lift, the second was used for callbacks as well as new auditions and was all day at the Cherokee Youth Center. Leading the auditions was Hanay Geiogamah. Also present were the show’s musical director Dennis Yerry a Seneca, female lead actress Jane Lind an Aleut, choreographer Marla Bingham a Wampanoag, head drummer John-John Grant and executive director of the CHA James Bradley, both Eastern Band Cherokee. I was there too, filming each of the auditions and their interactions with the production staff. Other interested parties drifted in and out.

The night of the first auditions there was a palpable sense of excitement in the air with the locals crowded into the front of the restaurant by the coffee bar and the production staff seated in the main dining hall behind closed doors. The crowd got so raucous at some points it was difficult to hear some of the more timid prospects speak or even sing. The bashfulness of some who came to audition was a major issue for the director who put on a performance of his own trying to coax reluctant auditors. This was especially the case with children.

In one instance a preteen boy and his little sister enter, Hanay tries to get him to sing, “Can you sing a little bit of Cherokee for us?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t want to.”

“But that’s what auditions are for, to sing.” He offers him ten or fifteen minutes to get ready to sing, but he’s still clammed shut, hunched over in his chair, elbows on his knees.

“I just want to get it over with,” he says and everyone laughed in sympathy.

Hanay, “But you want to be in the drama?”

“Yeah.”

“To do what?” Hanay asked.

“I don’t know.”

“But why do you want to be in the drama?”

“Because.”

Hanay is still not getting anywhere with him. “Because why?”

“I want to make money.”

Jane gasps audibly, Hanay arches his eyebrows, “Yeah?”

This interlude illustrates a friction unanticipated by the production staff. After decades of being marginalized in the play many Cherokees saw participation in the drama primarily in economic terms rather than being invested in the show as nationalists expressing their culture and difference, or as artists seeking an opportunity to grow as professionals. It was simply a summer job, maybe better than fast food but not as good as anything else that might pay more. Indeed, one of my friends from the 2006 show chose not to return for 2007 in order to take a job in construction for that very reason.

Later that evening we meet Shirley Welch who has worked in *Unto These Hills* for the past thirty-three summers. A tribal elder her physique cuts a dramatic figure of a dignified Indian woman and perhaps because of her look and experience Hanay wants to audition her for a speaking part.

“I don’t want a speaking part,” she tells him.

“But you can sing?” he responds, “What can you sing? Anything?”

There is some good natured laughter as he tries to fortify her confidence and get her to read the part. This and other moments from the audition were like therapy on a community

scale with Hanay coaching and affirming each Cherokee into believing they could perform. Shirley offers to sing Amazing Grace and Hanay tells her to stand up and relax in order to sing it. She tilts her head back in the chair and looks straight up at the ceiling and giggles.

“That’s what auditions are for,” Hanay says and sends her to the far corner of the dining room with instructions to walk toward us while singing. Shirley sings the first verse of Amazing Grace in the Cherokee language and she is very good.

Hanay asks her, “How come you don’t want to try a little speaking part? Not big, big, big.”

She responds, “Well, I’ve never had to.”

“What do you mean, ‘Had to’?”

“I’ve always been in the crowd scene.” For thirty-three years, she’s been an extra.

Hanay stammers as his thoughts get ahead of him, “So if I asked you...”

But she cuts him off, “Well, if you ask me I might.” We all laugh at her directness and the kind of old fashioned, I never told you because you never asked retort. “What do you want me to say?”

Hanay folds his hands together as if in prayer, “Shirley, I’m asking you. Will you read for us?”

Later that night, between applicants Hanay remarks that Shirley Welch was “cool” and Reuben Teesetuskie, one of the CHA Board of Trustees chimes in, “She just never had the opportunity. You’ll find there’s a lot of cases like her, because the readings were always

out in Chapel Hill. That's why a lot of 'em don't know what to expect when you say, 'Do you want to read? Do you want to act?'"

Dennis jokes, "This is like Candid Camera, they don't know what they're getting into."

James replies, "Before the locals just signed up, there was nothing expected of them."

Dennis and James do give a fair assessment of the audition process here. Perhaps as a consequence of being shut out of the production process for so long, the production staff found that by and large the Cherokees did not really know what happened at an audition or what they were supposed to do. Many people came expecting only to be in the crowd scene, others showed out of curiosity and hoped to garner some information about what the new show would be like. When asked to sing, dance, or read lines from the new script many Cherokees reacted with bafflement. They came to the audition not knowing that they would be expected to perform because there was no substantial local precedent of ever having to do that. Thus, the director became like a therapist or coach, meting out affirmations and coaxing individuals with praise and words of confidence. Hanay and the production staff found themselves making their casting evaluations only after teaching people how to audition. Additionally, when the production staff asked someone why he or she wanted to be in the drama they were somewhat astonished to hear replies such as, "It's a paycheck" and "I need a job." From the perspective on one portion of the Cherokee population this had been the instrumental function of the drama for generations. Even though Cherokee management was installed in the CHA some locals did not expect this aspect of the drama to change.

The morning of the second day of auditions I met Marla the choreographer at the Cherokee Youth Center. One of the first things she asked of me was for bottled water.

“There’s a Coke machine down the hall,” I said, unthinking.

“That’s not what I meant,” she smiled. So I was sent to fetch bottled water for the production staff. While on my errand I also made some copies for Hanay and retrieved a package of drums that had been delivered to the CHA mail room.

When I returned the production staff had moved into a large dance/ movement room with mirrors along the walls. They all sat together behind folding tables and Cherokees were brought in individually, or in the case of children in family groups.

Hanay was speaking to Marla, “We met a woman who had been in the drama for forty years and she had never been given the opportunity to read. I am going to cast her in this show.” Adding, “A lot of time people want to be in the show to get paid.”

James interjected, “Well used to all you had to do is show up every night and you get a paycheck.”

“We can make a whole new experience for them,” Marla concluded.

At the auditions often multiple things are going on at once. Two sisters entered and did a fancy shawl dance. Hanay confers with Marla about how he wants the Messenger Birds to travel and she translates this direction into instructions for the pair. John-John lays down rim shots with his hand drum to keep time. James and Dennis converse about the music that will accompany these characters. An assistant stage manager shows Jane into the room and she quickly proceeds over to Hanay’s side to speak with him. The dancers break to receive instruction from Hanay, he wants them to try speaking while moving. The two women smile

and struggle as they experiment with the difficulty of the task. They seem a little surprised that he is asking so much of them.

We stopped for lunch at Granny's Kitchen and I sat with Hanay and Jane. Between bites of fried chicken I asked him, "Have you ever done community theater before?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I imagine you working with theater professionals. Have you ever done something like this before?"

"Not exactly like this, no." I told him that watching him at the previous audition I thought his style was almost therapeutic and he agreed. "You do have to be a therapist," especially in the face of what he termed a "fear" pervasive in Indian communities. "We're here to help in any way we can. We're here to support and encourage."

Back at the Cherokee Youth Center a teenage girl enters the audition room with her boyfriend. They're both in black fashion with dyed hair, displaying a typically adolescent taciturn manner. Although she has come to the audition, she has no idea in what way she might contribute to the drama. In a sense, she's just shown up. When asked, she told us that she could play traditional drum and John-John passes her his hand drum and mallet so that she might demonstrate her technique.

DUM dum dum dum. DUM dum dum dum. She pounded out the familiar strains of Hollywood westerns and pep rally tomahawk chops. Now it was our turn to remain nervously quiet although knowing glances passed around the room.

After they had left, John-John remarked, "That doesn't sound like any traditional drum I've ever heard."

Tooter chimed in too, “I had to wipe the blood from my chin I was biting my tongue so hard.”

The Anthropologist as Indian Killer

There is a certain amount of anxiety that comes along with ethnography. Perhaps this is true of most anyone conducting field research regardless of geography or topic, but it was especially the case for me working with Indians because of anthropology’s long history of dominating native peoples through the production of scientific discourses. While in Cherokee I was always at my most diplomatic, constantly thinking about how my current actions might have repercussions for future opportunities. So I was both thrilled and terrified when the drama’s director, Hanay Geiogamah, invited me to audition for a role. It had not been my aim to be cast in the play and I certainly had my hands full in the office learning about the business of running culturally themed tourist attractions. But one day in early May after the auditions were complete I was making my way from the CHA offices over to Lift for lunch when the director and producer passed me in the parking lot and stopped me there. Both Hanay and Buddy are aware that I am an anthropologist though they do not know me personally.

“I want to audition you for a part,” Hanay says.

“Really?” I am very surprised and trying to be cool. I’m trying not to swoon.

“Yes. Please. It’s just a few lines,” Hanay is at his most charismatic, he is counting on me being excited and flattered. He and Buddy exchange a quick conspiratorial glance. Did they just smirk? What is going on here? I wonder if I’m being set up.

Later that evening I arrive backstage at the appointed time. I have never desired to be an actor, nor have I been in a high school play or anything. I am completely in the dark as to what “just a few lines” could be or how I should deliver them. The rehearsal space is filled with male dancers rehearsing a stylized war dance ceremony. Hanay notices me and points me toward an empty chair. The dancers do three more repetitions and Hanay calls for a break. Katie, the stage manager and a student at Pennsylvania State University, pulls out a long table for us to share and the dancers collect their own chairs. Everyone is seated and Katie passes out the scripts. Hanay goes around the table assigning lines.

“Matt, you will read Andrew Jackson.”

Old Hickory, scoundrel and Indian killer, is the drama’s villain. Fitting for an anthropologist, no? I put on my best drawl and read him as a Southern gentleman, dignified but with a touch of hick. We read the scene a couple of times.

Hanay brought the reading to a close when it was time for him to switch gears and focus on some new task. “Okay we’ll let you know,” was all he said to me.

I said thank you and goodbye. I walked down the stairs out of the hall and into the cooling mountain air. Being cast in the play would be a major time commitment and my family life already demanded much of me. While I worked and conducted my research, my wife Jessica was alone in a single-wide trailer with our two year old twins snatching minutes of naptime to cook, clean, shop, and write her dissertation in zoology. Taking a role in the

drama would provide a new angle on my research but for her it would mean less time and more stress. What's more her stress could become my stress making us both unhappy.

Jessica did come around on the notion of my taking a role in the play. Though I was not cast as Andrew Jackson I did hold a number of walk-on roles including a Spaniard, a preacher, and an American soldier. Notably all of these roles were made available to me because of my whiteness. Over time I would be trained in two additional roles including one as a Booger, which is a masked trickster spirit, and as a Clan Spirit, also a masked role. These roles were ones in which my whiteness could be hidden. This opportunity was a great boon to my research as I was onstage and backstage six nights a week for eleven weeks for the duration of *Unto These Hills... a Retelling*. But before I could take the stage and perform I had to practice.

Rehearsal: Boredom and Repetition

Rehearsals were held in a small backstage building that had previously been used as a dining hall when the CHA offered its resident cast catered meals. Poorly lit, poorly ventilated, and with grease stains on the carpet the rehearsal space cramped the performers because a large portion of the building was taken up by a kitchen. What little air circulation it had made for hot, sweaty rehearsals as the performers danced through the hot afternoons and evenings.

Cast now in the play as an extra I have a legitimate reason to be in the rehearsal space. I take notes furiously but it seems impossible to keep up with the pace of action around me. Seven men line up to do the Welcome/ War dance, John-John has the drum. They

receive their instructions from Marla who remains in dialogue with Daniel, an Eastern Band Cherokee, who is constantly offering his input and expertise. Marla's demeanor is strict and it is apparent to all that she is the one in charge. They start a repetition but she stops it short.

"Are you sure?" she asks one of the Cherokee men. "You seem apprehensive."

"I've really never done this before."

"Okay," she says with a smile and they go back to the top for another take. Marla reminds them to make strikes with their knives and war clubs at the whoop and she turns to confer with Daniel on this point.

"Three slow, three fast," he declares. "Usually three or four, depending on how far you have to travel."

The men break to practice their strikes and John-John shows Andy his moves. Andy, a cut-up and prankster, goes into a Kung Fu routine with the war club and they both laugh. Then everyone stops to listen to a two-minute musical prelude so they can imagine how to enact preparing for the war dance.

Marla paints a mental picture, "You don't know if you will live or die."

Hanay chimes in to explain, "The motion here is individual, washing, praying, putting on paint. Do two or three of those in mime action."

"I just want to see what you guys can bring then I can add," Marla says.

Hanay narrates over the music, "You could be scared. You can twitch, you can jerk. But by the end of this you will have composed yourself and gotten your male courage

together. Remember this is all symbolic, selectively representative of what you would do out on a vision quest. Imagine yourselves moving in and out of lighting.” They repeat the scene again, only this time Marla moves them from a line to a scatter.

John-John eggs them on, “When you holler, holler like you mean it. Think about it this way. You’re the one standing between them and your family. Think of those people as your enemy.” Then he lets out a blood-curdling scream, surprising everyone.

They begin their motions again and as they dance Marla instructs them not to travel so fast, to move with intensity but taking smaller steps.

Daniel calls Marla over to explain something, “This guy in the middle, he’s our leader. We don’t ever get in front of him. Maybe you could form like a V.”

They begin again with the preparing for battle scene, this time moving into a V-formation. The men fall in, holler, and John-John begins drumming and singing with Marla miming their steps and motions back at them. Jane comes over to my chair and whispers to me about how her apartment still needs a phone and cable TV.

Later that evening the room is hot and crowded with participants waiting to get instructions. I stop to talk with Hanay but get the brush off. He is perturbed that the costume shop is interrupting his rehearsal to take measurements. I chat with Dennis and take a seat next to Dan, a drama student at Western Carolina University and one of the wardrobe assistants. Names are called out and a group coalesces on the spotted and dirty floor, brightly colored masking tape tics out features of the stage.

Hanay addresses the crowd, “Standing by for placements please. Don’t lose your scripts please. If we find one lying around,” he trails off, “we’ll do something to you okay?” There is some chatter, enough so Hanay has raise his voice to silence everyone. He stops to ask what I’m doing, “Is that your diary?”

“Field notes.”

“Don’t talk or visit,” he admonishes the cast, “Everybody pay attention now, we’re trying to get an idea of how this all goes together. Everybody go to the side you come in on. Places near your first entrance.” He pauses to confer with Katie and Marla before instructing the three assistant stage managers, “Keep them under control,” he says motioning to the seated cast members who are not in this scene. They chuckle among themselves but Hanay is grave, “Serious, keep them under control, don’t watch the play.”

While the scene rehearsal is going on others leaf through their scripts. Men shake hands and drink coffee.

“Places!”

Two women, Regina and Paula, begin to sing. They walk across the stage, stumble, then laugh and hug.

“Keep going!” Hanay tells them and they pick right back where they left off.

Marla comes near my seat to speak with Dennis about a tape cue, then a Booger enters the scene too early and Marla turns her attention back to the stage to direct him. The lead eagle crosses the stage, bringing more birds behind her.

One bird loses her place and Hanay calls out, “Place her Marla.” He describes the special effects planned for this scene while Marla leads the Clan Spirits out onto stage and the Birds read their lines. Since only six Spirits showed up, Katie fills in for the seventh. Hanay and Marla debate where to make a dance cue for the Clan Spirits, then they instruct the Spirits on how to step.

Hanay points to one elder, “See! He’s souling it up. He’s doing his own little thing. Everybody do your own little thing. Okay, top of their lines.”

An assistant stage manager shushes some chitchatting men and the Spirits read their lines before going into a dance. One makes a mistake and laughs but Hanay remains stern, “Rattle. Rattle! Rattle! Give me some dance rattle Yo-Yo!” Hanay corrects the rattle technique and the scene ends with all the Spirits speaking in chorus. Hanay makes them repeat it once more, then he asks them to call forth Kanati. Katie leans over to remind Hanay that he has not assigned those lines and in turn he instructs Marla to write a cue that seats the Spirits at the great hunter’s entrance, she only rolls her eyes. There is a little confusion at the end of the scene as the stage set is supposed to revolve, hiding or revealing the Spirits. Villagers fill the stage and then the four Boogers enter with Hernando De Soto.

“Marla, watch this. These are the Boogers.”

“Fellas, you’re taking too long. It needs to be constant movement.”

They quickly work out a cue for the Boogers based on Selu’s lines – when she says a certain phrase the Boogers will start moving and be in place by another phrase. One Booger pretends to dip from tea cups, another pretends to ash a cigarette holder, then the four mime confrontation with each other.

“Stop and black out,” Hanay calls. This is the director’s signal to the cast that we are moving on to the next scene. There is talking among the cast members and a stage manager has to shush them into behaving themselves and start following along in their scripts.

Marla gives direction, “This side turn to the left, this side turn to the right. War dance coming up. Scatter. Wait! Go back.”

“You’re getting ahead of me,” Hanay tells Marla and at the distracted cast members, “Listen up over there please.” Then he begins to describe his vision, “There’s only going to be little shafts of light. There’s going to be steam in here and fog. Here we go into war dance.” John-John begins to sing and drum, “Slowly backing up, backing up.” The men are forming into a V when Dan interrupts my note taking to show me a contract and take me into the kitchen for measurements.

“This one’s a little friendly,” he says and has me hold my own inseam. I have to stand up straight and try not bend my head down to watch him. We make small talk, or I do mostly. Dan tells me that this is his first time backstage, usually he acts. I ask if he was cast as a soldier or a land grabber but it turns out he’s already in another play, *Ruthless*, in drag as a female character. He admits to having never seen the classic *Unto These Hills* even though Western Carolina University is only minutes away. He did hear that it was “cheesy.” We are done in ten or fifteen minutes and when I step out of the kitchen the rehearsal has moved on, leaving me a little confused. In a moment I recognize it as the wedding scene, the ribbon girls mime tying a ceremonial blanket knot on a warrior.

“You’re too late, please pay attention,” Marla is a stern task master but what else can she be in order to tame this crowd of non-professionals?

Almost an hour has passed when during the Trail of Tears scene Dennis called my name and motioned for me to come over. He needs to leave the stage rehearsal in order to work with the musicians and cannot wait around cueing the music to the scene. My responsibilities were simple: start and stop one audio track, volume out, and re-cue the track for the next repetition. Really there was nothing to it, but it had to be done. While I was cueing music there was a lull and I turned to find James Bradley standing behind me.

“See how indispensable I am,” I joked as I manned the tape player.

“You’re always indispensable,” he returned. “In the right place at the right time.”

We did four repeats of the Removal and they seemed to take forever. A lot of youth are in this particular scene and parents had already arrived to give rides home. The groans came out louder with each repetition, people were getting bored and started cutting up to pass the time. One girl snacked on a piece of bread then pretended to offer a scrap to someone as if they were dying on the Trail.

“It has to last,” she croaked and they both giggled.

On the next repetition of the Trail of Tears the front group walked across stage too fast and got called back. I shouted, “You’re in Oklahoma already,” and everybody laughed.

As we moved into Act Two Hanay could tell that people were getting uncomfortable, “Don’t get impatient. You have to be very, very patient to make these things happen. The second act is like a healing ceremony to bring the split bodies back together.” He runs through a verbal description of the act. Hanay confers with James over the representation of

the Green Corn ceremony in the classic show which, he says, does not match up with what he read about it in Speck (1993 [1951]).

James tries to remember, “It was different when we were kids back in the ‘60s. But the drama’s changed so much since then.”

Hanay wanted to add the Green Corn but was told by some of the Cherokees assembled there it would be disrespectful so he opened it up to suggestions. One person floats the Mix dance, another suggests a stick ball game, somebody else suggests the Friendship dance or Round dance. Dennis and the other musicians file into the room and John-John is adamant that the Green Corn cannot be onstage, “not in public.”

“Now listen, all of you,” Hanay decrees. “We’re not trying to violate anything. We’re not going to do it. I’m not going to tell you that again.”

“Cool,” and John-John gives a thumbs up and takes his seat. Then a mild argument breaks out between two cast members over the Round dance.

“I’ve never heard of a Cherokee Round dance,” he says.

“Well we used to do it in Big Cove all the time. I should know,” she retorts.

“Well, how’s the song go?”

“I don’t know, I’ll have to ask my mom.”

Then, as if on cue, Myrtle Driver enters the room and the tension subsides almost immediately. The air seems to smile in her presence. “You can do a Stomp dance,” she

explains. “There can even be a fire. But it is a reenactment.” Dennis rises to give her his chair while Hanay explains to Myrtle what tone he is looking for and folks chat among themselves.

John-John raises his hand, “I guess the problem we’re kind of having with it when we’re out there doing the motions – that’s what they represent.”

Hanay is now the cool diplomat, “We’re visitors here, we don’t want to violate or take advantage of Cherokee.”

Myrtle offers her position, “There is one part of the Green Corn that everybody joins in. And it is a celebration.”

Dane gives his opinion, “What I believe is if you don’t do the steps right, you’re not doing the ceremony.”

Hanay seems intrigued, “What is it then?”

“It’s just a glimpse, in my point of view it would be alright. If we did it in the right order, that would be sacrilegious.”

“What we want to convey is absolute joy at coming back home,” says Hanay.

John-John thinks, “There is a part where the women shake their shells as hard as they could.”

“That would be fantastic if we could do that.”

Myrtle returns to Dane’s insight, “The dances are a time of happiness. But the dance you do on Wednesday is not the dance you do on Friday. The grounds have to be doctored.” James lost in concentration, nods thoughtfully. Myrtle turns to John-John and says, “Let me

tell you some words in English to describe it. There's a humor. It's a comedy. I could write you some words."

John-John takes his instruction, "If you want me to sing them. I didn't put words in it because I only use words when I..." He gestures with his hands up to the sky and speaks Cherokee.

"Well only if you want to sing them."

"But only if you want me to do it."

Hanay declares that Myrtle is the official cultural advisor of the drama and she mocks being important, snapping her imaginary lapels, doing a parody of smug satisfaction. "Okay, let's close this discussion," he says alerting us to the other pressing tasks at hand.

Next Hanay turns to Dennis and requests the Horse dance. "I want this to be a version of the New dance," then he turns to James, "We got to fill that big theater. We got to make ya'll some money." Paula and Dennis sing the Horse dance together while the professional dancers from AIDT, the American Indian Dance Theater, run their routine and we all watch. They have to improvise a bit to fit their moves to the tempo of a new song.

Hanay instructs the entire assembled cast, "Pay attention. As many of you as we can get into this, this is the big finale. Clan Spirits, you're doing your own version over here. Boogers you're doing your version, rockin' it up."

Rehearsal ends, folks mill around and practice. Katie gives instructions for the next day. One of the actors comes up to speak with Hanay. Jane comes over to remind me to fix her phone. People make their goodbyes and head for the exit. Myrtle speaks with Chochise

and Dennis, while Marla gets tips from Eddie. Buddy appears briefly now that the work is done. Spencer starts to clean up, putting away the folding chairs and setting out the trash. Marla does a bit of the New dance by herself as Myrtle speaks with James. The room has cleared of the great crowd but at least eighteen people are still left.

I talk with James briefly about the seemingly dilapidated rehearsal space. “I think it’s great,” he crows. “John and I want to rip out the carpet and put in wood. And mirrors on the wall. It’s a great rehearsal space because it’s about the same dimensions as the stage.”

Now I finally take my exit, totally exhausted. And I didn’t even do anything!

At home and in bed, I try to go back to words I did not write. I did not describe the breaks when most folks would file outside to smoke or stretch or just generally get out of the hot and muggy room and feel a nighttime breeze. As the rehearsals went by I never did get around to doing that either.

* * *

The following day at the CHA office Hanay came in to make copies, or rather to instruct me on how to make copies for him: single-sided, paper clipped not stapled. I took the opportunity to share my observations.

“I thought it was just fascinating the other night when John-John and Myrtle and Dane were talking about what they saw as the difference between ceremony and theater.”

“Sometimes I wish John-John knew a little more about theater,” he muttered. He continued by telling me about a future book project of his exploring these same issues.

“You have to think that some of the power of theater is borrowed from ritual,” I said.

“Definitely.”

* * *

It is another warm evening and inside the dining hall it is sweaty and hot. The first half of today’s rehearsal is devoted to retooling Hanay’s New dance to become the finale.

Hanay is getting impatient, “Come on, come on now!” The AIDT dancers run through a demo for the assembled Cherokee actors. Then speaking to everyone Hanay says, “As shocking as it may seem we’re going to put all of you into this.”

“I’m going to put you into your final position,” Marla says. “This is not where you start, but where you finish.”

There is a lot of chitchat as she puts bodies in their places, some Cherokees confer with one another about squeezing in an extra job on the side.

“Which one is Katie?”

“The one with the bright pink pen.”

“They told me to talk to her.”

“Are you stage crew?”

The AIDT dance team quickly trains some of the better Cherokee dancers. They will be the ones responsible for working with the youth, showing them the moves. Most people are still seated watching the dance practice or talking. Marla tells one of the girls to spit out her gum then clears the floor to work one-on-one with the youth.

“Five, six, seven, eight,” she counts giving instructions to the beat.

The repetitions are boring, especially if you are not the one out there on the floor concentrating. Doug, one of the AIDT dancers, sits directly between me and fan blowing my direction. Once he catches my eye he mimes airing out his armpits in the fan’s breeze. I pretend to hold my nose and we laugh silently. I spy other dancers cutting up by doing the Chicken and the Swim. Andy does his Kung Fu routine again. These kinds of distractions are a welcome break from rehearsal’s repetitiveness.

“I really need your focus please,” Marla orders. Katie has to yell and clap to shush people their talking is so loud: clearly backstage at the drama is also an important social scene. One woman’s cell phone goes off and Marla gives her a look of death. Putting together the multiple groups – villagers, warriors, Boogers, Clan Spirits, the AIDT dancers, Kanati and Selu too – we are ready to do a cumulative run through.

“The drum beat changes. It’s going to be freestyle intertribal,” Marla explains to them. “But you have to be very careful not to run into someone.”

People fan themselves with scripts as they follow her instructions and walk to their final spots. From a separate building downhill, the sound of the musicians wafts past.

Hanay offers a critique of the Eagle Dancers, “Can this be a modified Grand Entry step?”

Doug is not so sure, “Compared to the rest of the piece it’s a little off.”

“It’s better than trotting,” Hanay retorts, referring to their current footwork.

“It feels too powwowish,” Doug argues.

Hanay is confident in the look he wants, “I don’t mind powwowish. I don’t mind it at all. It’s better than trotting.” Powwow must have seemed a step in the right direction from the ballet and modern dance moves of the past. However the powwow-like features of the new drama would be roundly contested by some Cherokee members of the audience come performance time. Hanay and his dancers continue to create the dance as they practice it.

He stops them, “We’re not going to fix this here, on the spot, but ya’ll think about it amongst yourselves and come up with some different things.” He cautions them to make their dance more original and less trite, “I don’t want to get ya’ll all perturbed, but it does look like a routine. Overall it’s nice, but a little busy.”

Katie reminds Hanay that according to the way the stage properties are laid out on the rehearsal floor with colored tape that one of the dancers has ended up on a platform.

“Okay! Take five everyone,” and I dart down to my car for a bottle of water. This is the real reason I never take notes during the breaks. By the time they come I need a break!

We reconvene and Hanay announces, “I have something new for the warriors.”

Jason, one of the AIDT dancers jokes, “Warriors, come out and play.”

Hanay’s idea is for the warriors to apply war paint to themselves in unison, moving their arms in swoops. It seems kind of silly and there’s a lot of laughter and joking about it. Smiling faces and giggles.

Hanay reprimands one of them, “You’re not putting on a bra.”

Part of the reason this is so funny is because it is late in the evening. People are tired and getting a little punch drunk from all the hard work.

“This will all be coordinated out. This is just to put some ritual structure on it. All the non-Indians in the audience are going to wonder, ‘How do they get the paint on them?’ We’re going to show them in this nice ritual.”

* * *

An afternoon rehearsal: I did not have anything pressing in the office so I showed up to just to see what was happening. There was a quick meeting at the dining hall and then we walked downhill to the theater for “blocking out.”

On the way down I shook hands with Steve, “You’re Eddie’s brother, right?”

“Yeah,” he shrugs, “But there’s nothing you can do about that.” Steve has a great laugh. He had been in Arkansas for the past five years and from there he got a bad impression of Texas, my home state.

“Hey, I left Texas eleven years ago,” I bargained and we laughed again. I told him, “I’m trying to tell the story of how the Cherokee are taking over the drama.” Steve seemed genuinely encouraged by the recent change in management and interested in how things were progressing since his youth when he had been in the crowd scene.

“I think it’s going to be pretty interesting,” he said being noncommittal.

I pressed him again, from a different angle, “What do you think the average Joe Cherokee will think?”

“I hope they’ll like it. Some of them may be put off by the Hoop dance. That’s not Cherokee. But it’s just one part.” As it would turn out the debate over what is and is not Cherokee about the new drama would expand beyond just the Hoop dance.

In the theater I set up my video camera to record a few scenes. Hanay saw me as a warm body and said, “You don’t need to film this.” He immediately put me in as one of Hernando de Soto’s soldiers. That afternoon I was also one of Tecumseh’s warriors. The person on stage mattered less during “blocking out” because the director is focusing on how the actors fill space on stage. While we stood around Hanay made adjustments to our pacing, which entrance to use, how flanks should angle and curve. The whole time we ran the routines the men were cutting jokes and the women were gossiping and chatting.

I was waiting in the wings for my cue to enter when it dawned on me that this was the origin of the phrase “waiting in the wings.” John-John and Dane were there too, filling in as warm bodies in the Tecumseh scene. Come show time none of us would perform this scene. Dane asked me who I was and what I was doing, and I explained I was an anthropologist.

“I don’t know about all these anthro’s and hissies,” he fumed. “Comin’ in and studying our people. They don’t really know us.”

I paused, a little taken aback, “Well, I’ll try and stay out of your way then.”

He smiled broadly, “I’m just playing,” and explained he was quoting a line from Russell Means. John-John laughed too. I was not the only one made the butt of a joke that day. Dane was getting into the role of playing a Shawano warrior and imagining himself under the command of Tecumseh.

“If I had a time machine,” Dane said, trailing off.

To which John-John retorted, “You’d be so scared.” And then shifting the register of his voice into a girlish pitch, “I’m going to stay with my Granny and hide in the mountains.” They looked at each other and laughed.

* * *

As the debut approached James and Hanay both took to giving the cast brief lectures or pep talks intended either to lay down the law regarding bad behavior or else encourage us that, through the magic of theater, this show was really going to happen. For these talks the cast was usually assembled in the audience section with the speaker standing below.

“I know per cap is coming up,” James began. “If you’re going to blow per cap do that during the day. I know people want to go to Wal-Mart and buy new cars, but you’ve got to come to rehearsal. We had a lot of people in the powwow this weekend. And a lot of people won. Next powwow is Fourth of July and you can’t be in that one. This is our chance to do this show. To show everyone that we do have the skills to put on a professional show.”

“Nothing is set,” Hanay cautioned. “Everything could change. I hope you think about that in a positive, creative way. If you do get changes, nobody is trying to mess with you or say you’re not doing good. We’re still seeing how things fit in terms of timing and length.”

We break the announcements and the cast files backstage and prepares to run Act Two. Since I’m not in the second act, I decide to sit in the audience behind the musicians rather than get in the way backstage.

Katie uses a microphone to announce cues and give directions, periodically turning to Hanay for clarification, “Okay, so here we go. We have everyone ready backstage.” The

noise backstage is loud and the cast seems a little confused. This is only their second time to run through the performance on stage.

Jane begins to read her lines. Hanay directs her, “Don’t get too emotional. Calmly, like I told you.” As the script changes it becomes more challenging for the actors to follow along. Entrances and exits get misplaced. In the background actors fan themselves in the heat.

“Listen up now,” Hanay announces over the microphone, “I’m inventing as I go along.” More changes are made and the cast goes back to the top and runs it again. The dance captains get involved in spacing the crowd in their movements, then they run it again. There is a lull in the repetitions and laughter echoes out from the crowd of actors on stage. Some things have still not been “blocked” yet – Kanati is supposed to be tending a live fire but it is not known where the pyrotechnic can be placed.

Since we are rehearsing in broad daylight Hanay has to describe the lighting he imagines, “And lights out. Let’s do it all again from the top.”

Tooter, one of the Clan Spirits, asks Hanay a question about their movement on stage.

“That’s still muddled in my mind. It’s getting unmuddled now as we speak.”

One obstacle facing Hanay is that the construction of the stage is still ongoing. He cannot finalize the Clan Spirit cues until the builders are done. Everything is coming down to the wire.

Next the dancers give the hoedown a run through, it seems like they are really having fun when all of sudden everyone quits.

“That’s all we’ve got.”

The sun is setting, the red bricks which were making us sweat earlier now emit a gentle heat. The light dims and a cool breeze rustles by. Now they run the Friendship dance. Everyone loves this dance and John-John really puts his soul in it as he sings and drums. When it comes time for the children to do the traditional dances, John-John sets aside his drum and picks up his rattle. Hanay presses him as to whether it is possible to do them with a drum instead. John-John explains that Beaver, Deer, and Eagle are done with drum but these dances in the Children’s Suite – Bear, Corn, and Quail – are only done with rattle. Trying a different tactic, Hanay asks if they can try it with different kinds of rattles and John-John relents. He’s amenable to small changes to the social dances.

“We’re going to have to trim that one down, make it a little shorter,” Hanay feels that the traditional dances drag out too long. The boys and girls are drenched in sweat and wipe their faces with their t-shirts.

Moving on to the finale, Hanay tries different entrances with each repetition. John-John gets a special entrance coming off the youth’s social dances, the singers come from behind the council house. It’s getting dusky now and the actors have very limited light as they totally fill the stage for the Horse dance.

“Start having a good time, it’s a revival. Even the Clan Spirits can get into this one.” Hanay has some of the dancers rotate to face the Clan Spirits. “No, no, don’t raise your hands. It looks like you’re worshiping them. That’s not the point. Dennis! At the Clan Spirits showcase I want you to really jazz it up.”

The Clan Spirits have a minute to themselves in the grand finale when they can act stupid. They slap each other's rears and boogie around. Hanay thinks for a moment, "We'll make it look cool. Right now it's too sudden. I'll fix it tomorrow. Okay, let's take it from the top."

Dennis tells Hanay that if he knew how many counts the dance was going to be he could time the music to end on the last step. Hanay tells him, "That's not possible right now."

Late that night, after rehearsal, Yo-Yo, one of the AIDT musicians, spied me writing notes. He asked, "Are you some kind of reporter?"

"I'm an anthropologist."

"What's that?"

* * *

The next day rehearsal is back in the dining hall and the Boogers are practicing their routine, everyone watches as Hanay directs them. "Do something nasty." Dane mimes a fart as the Boogers play follow the leader to rim shots and a shaker.

"A little nastier," Hanay suggests and Dane does pelvic thrusts. The other Boogers are laughing so hard they can barely mime while the cast and crew get rowdy, hooting and laughing.

Hanay rotates them 90 degrees and has them work more improvisation: ass scratching, nose picking. There is more laughter, coming to a crescendo as the scene ends, and then applause. As a performer readies for the debut their first audiences are the crew and fellow cast members.

Aside from the antics of the Boogers the cast seemed especially bored at this rehearsal and folks talked loudly to one another. Jane had to discipline some of the youth for their loud talking, chiding them in front of everyone. Katie is beginning to lose her voice and croaks in a hoarse shout to silence the din. As some of the teenagers amused themselves by tapping each other on the shoulder and looking away I sat down next to John-John and talked to him about the new drama so far.

“So John-John, what do you think of the new drama so far?”

He widened his eyes and nodded enthusiastically, “I think some parts are real neat.” And then turning the corners of his mouth down and dropping his head he shrugged, “Some others...”

“What about that Hoop dance?”

John-John modulated his hand to indicate a so-so, “It doesn’t really fit. It’s not Cherokee.”

“You think some people are going to be upset, seeing that Hoop dance?”

“Only time will tell,” he replied. “There’s going to be some questions about it that’s for sure. Questions why.” From John-John’s diplomatic deferral that it is other people who will do the questioning, I was left feeling that his sentiment towards the Hoop dance may have been stronger than his so-so hand gesture indicated. For whatever reason, he did not reveal his full opinion to me at that time.

In rehearsal, Eddie filled in as Major Davis. It is just six days before debut and Hanay is still writing the script. Eddie did some of the lines with his own improvisation. “Who is the

Chief?” his character bellowed. From across the room Dane hammed it up, pointing to his chest and earning chuckles from the cast.

Eddie repeated the line, “Who is the Chief?” and Dallin, one of the AIDT dancers and about a foot taller came out of the crowd and looked down at him. Everyone laughed. Not only because Eddie and Dallin were comically mismatched, but that it was also disrespectful to the historical figure of Major Davis, a small man in a big uniform.

At the end of the last scene we gave ourselves a spontaneous round of applause. That night rehearsal closed with a pep talk from Hanay. Like a coach psyching up the team before the big game, Hanay praised the cast and he reassured everyone that it is okay to have some “slop” in the show at this point. He reminded everyone how far we had come in the three weeks since auditions and how extraordinary the circumstances were, considering that most of the Cherokee are rehearsing evenings only. He stressed the importance of transitions between scenes and encouraged everyone to take themselves seriously.

“Do it for yourselves,” he said. He reminded everyone that this was Cherokee’s chance to prove itself and to “take over” the drama on a grand scale. It was an affirmation and he instilled in everyone that they were surrounded by a staff of great expertise who he also praised heartily. “We will make you look good.”

Still, it is hard to believe that local’s night, the first dress rehearsal of the season when all tribal members and their families are invited, is in just three days and we have not even done a full dress rehearsal on stage.

* * *

Just two days before our first public performance I spent six hours in rehearsal. That afternoon we practiced the Battle of Horseshoe Bend and I was excited and surprised by the action of fighting. The physical contact is only a little strenuous, but still it was unexpected. I am holding a rifle in a crouching position. A Creek warrior comes from behind me and steals the weapon. I turn around and he swings the butt at me. I duck the blow and tackle him, lifting him up onto my shoulder. We spin one and a half rotations. I set him on his feet and he drops the weapon. I grab the weapon from the ground and chase him off stage.

I worked this scene with Denny and Marla, but without Porky and Mike, the youths cast in the Creek roles. The choreographers reassure me they are both skinny and either one should not be too heavy to lift. Immediately on trying to lift Denny I noticed I was holding my breath.

Marla looked at me concerned, "Are you okay?" I guess I had a funny look on my face. Timing the breath is important and they advised me to exhale on the lift.

Anthony, a drama student from Western Carolina University, is also cast as a soldier. Now it is his turn to rehearse fighting with Denny. They struggle over possession of a rifle. Denny rolls onto his back while Anthony somersaults forward. Denny takes the butt of the rifle and strikes Anthony while he is down. Neither one of us has any lines. We kill and get killed.

Reuben Fischer plays piano for the choir but fills in with the soldiers for the fight scene. A tomahawk wielding Creek charges him. Reuben blocks the blow with the barrel of his rifle. Then he runs at his adversary with a bayonet. Later, in the wedding scene where a Cherokee ceremony is interrupted by Major Davis, Reuben was to walk on as one of the

soldiers. Marla directs him to move in menacingly toward the groom but Reuben is quick to smile and has a gentle demeanor. Even with coaching he did not seem enough of a threat and this role was transferred to me.

After dinner I returned to rehearsal, which turned out to be only Act Two. Since I was not in any of the scenes I went to the costume shop and met Ruth who was busy making wigs. She asked, "Is there still crazy talk about you being an Indian?" When I told her yes she angrily nixed the idea. I did get to try on a wig and see myself with straight hair and I tried on a Clan mask, both are gorgeous. Ruth is kind, funny, and fully engaged with her work while making conversation with me.

Ruth's assistant, Christie, looks just like her but about twenty years younger. They call each other twins. "We come out in the morning wearing the same colors," she laughs. Ruth had been working sixteen hour days, though she was able to cut that back to twelve hours thanks to Christie's expert help. With the debut looming the pressure is on her to finish, "But you're worth it. I don't know it Hanay is worth it. But you are." The new show, she said, would be a "thing of beauty." Her own very high personal standards carried over into making everyone look good especially since, in her opinion, the old show did not look good.

Ruth and Christie both came to wig and make-up through opera. However Ruth's one Cherokee assistant, Bryce, had a different background. "I heard that he does everybody's hair for prom," and that was enough promise for her. Ruth taught him how the wiggling process is completed through ventilation, or the threading of individual human hairs through a lace like

fabric in order to give the most realistic appearance. He caught on quick and soon completed Andrew Jackson's eyebrows.

As she gave me a beard and mustache, Ruth supposed that there were even more Cherokee who wanted to be involved with the drama than were actually here. They were just waiting to see what the new show would be and will make up their minds to join in future years.

Tonight at the rehearsal what stood out to me was the joy and pleasure of dancing. Everyone loves watching the Children's Suite and the Friendship dance is also a delight to behold. People smile as the dance and really shake it!

Two Cherokee teenagers have been flirting with me too. They call me "Mr. Miller" and pretend to be bitchy to me yelling, "Stop following me." At other turns they try to impress me by punching teenage boys in my presence. Today one of them gave me a piece of her birthday cookie. Both of them have been constantly looking at me or joking with me.

When we shifted to the dress rehearsal I had some confusion. I thought I had been cut from the preacher scene but was wrong. At the last minute I had to make a quick change out of my Spanish armor and into a black robe. Not only did I need to practice being on stage, I needed to practice changing costume off stage. I was late and missed my cue. Denny reprimanded me, "That was NOT a quick change."

"It was my first time," I protested. Much of directing is like coaching, one has to be critical and encouraging at the same time, constantly pushing the cast to do better.

While the prologue unfolded, I was perched with Zahay in the bushes at stage right and asked him a few questions.

“Were you ever in the old drama?”

“Nooo! They didn’t take our kind,” he said emphatically. Though he allowed that some Cherokee were in the Removal scene, by and large the cast was, “White or gay.” Right now, though, he loves being a Booger. “The mask kind of takes over.”

Earlier in the dressing rooms, which I share with the soldiers and warriors, some of the AIDT men were just as jocular. They felt a need to carefully position their masculinity in order to justify their use of make-up, especially given the presence of gay Cherokee men and gay White men from Western Carolina University. This surprised me at first because I took the presence of homosexual men and women in theater as a given. Some heterosexual men felt they needed to enact gendered performances in order to retain their masculinity while in theater, but otherwise worked in harmony with their gay male counterparts.

Around midnight we wrapped up the first costume rehearsal. In the men’s dressing room Dallin and Doug were talking. They know the show is not ready. Maybe it will be solid in another week, “But that guy from the historical society won’t stop it for nothing. I hope he was in the audience tonight.” James has been in conflict with the production staff who have expressed some desire to push back the date of the opening night.

* * *

The afternoon of the final rehearsal it was raining. Most folks were hanging out on the bridge. Someone brought down a huge bag of popcorn from the concession stands and

passed it around. People smoked, listened to iPods, talked on cell phones, took pictures, and socialized. Ollie and Marci, the two girls who call me “Mr. Miller” hung out with me. They played me a song by one of their favorite bands, Senses Fail, and I showed them pictures of my twins. When the rain cleared I was dubbed Booger understudy and took the stage in a mask. It does indeed, “take over.”

Performing Participant Observation

To communicate with a large cast spread out across Cherokee and Cullowhee the production staff instituted a rehearsal line. Using a telephone answering machine each day a different greeting message is left with whatever instructions or information the director wants to provide for the cast. It is each cast member’s responsibility to call the rehearsal line each day to get the most up to date information. On the date of the debut performance, local’s night, I called the rehearsal line in the morning before work.

“All cast called at 6:30. We go with Act One at 9:00,” Katie’s voice on the message spoke, leaving the impression that the performance would only be Act One.

By the time I got to work Linda said it had already been a crazy morning. Not only had the box office been busy, our first paying customers would arrive in only two days, but everyone was distressed about the message on the rehearsal line. She conveyed that the late starting time and prospect of premiering only half a show was unacceptable. “Both John and James had to go see Buddy and Hanay and tell them, ‘No we’re going to have a show tonight.’” The general sentiment in the office was that the locals would be angry at seeing only half a show and that it would be better for the second half to be rough than not to be

shown at all. However calling Act Two “rough” would be generous. Not only have we not rehearsed Act Two in costume, it has not been “teched” yet meaning there are no lighting or sound cues.

By Linda’s description local’s night is “a tradition” and the production staff’s willingness to break with that tradition speaks to a cultural miscommunication about the value of this particular event. On top of that if James and John succeed in convincing the production staff to start the show on time and perform both acts then new information will have to be communicated to the entire cast and crew, all in less than seven hours.

James locked his door and prepared to leave the office, “I’m going up on the hill to see how much trouble I can cause. I may come back as director of the show.”

Later that morning when he returned, James was visibly exhausted. “Well that crisis is averted,” he sighed. “I’m so sick of the drama. Next year we’ll have a director that’s good. I’m fed up with this flying by the seat of our pants and ‘Let’s see what happens.’” According to James he found Hanay to be in a panicked state and he had to calm him down with soothing words, “It’s just a show. It’s not going to stop the war in Iraq. It’s not going to give everyone free health care.”

Even though it is local’s night I spent the day working in the CHA office. I felt sure that up at the theater more interesting things were happening but instead I was trapped at my desk. At first this job was liberating in that it provided access to parts of Cherokee that would have otherwise been closed to me. Now it was starting to feel more cumbersome.

When I got off work I stopped by the theater to see if anyone needed help. The technical crew was working with the stage manager to prepare the lights and sound for that night’s debut. They had already ordered from Domino’s pizza but no one had the time to go

pick it up. I volunteered to get their food plus make an extra stop by McDonalds to get a Big Mac for the one person who would prefer not to eat pizza. I barely had time to get my own dinner after I helped Casey move his ladders and tools.

The cast arrived and we did a run through of Act One, then we got into costume and performed. It was the first time we had run through Act Two in costume on stage and the first time we had done Acts One and Two back to back. At intermission I changed into my street clothes, snuck up the hill, and went into the house where I met James and John, Reuben Teesetuskie and Ray Kinsland. After touching base with management on how the opening night was faring (everyone was tight lipped, taking a wait and see attitude) I snuck back down the hill to the dressing room, changed into costume in time to take a bow. It was exhilarating to receive a standing ovation. The cast undressed and went back out to the theater to receive “quick notes” from the director and stage manager who want the show to “tighten” and thus run faster. We were praised by Hanay, Marla, and James for the performance, then admonished by Leah and Hanay to care better for our costumes. Rehearsal times for the following day were announced then the cast was dismissed.

Compared to the classic production *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* is a complete reversal of the old in terms of story as well as management. Nevertheless I have already heard people complaining about differences between paychecks. There are some legitimate explanations for differential pay and not in the least among them are clerical errors originating in the CHA’s office as the staff scrambles to install updated payroll and accounting software. But the heart of the matter lies in the different tiers or scales used to compensate different kinds of participation in the drama. The principal cast including the non-Cherokee Indians are paid the most because they are the most experienced performers

who have the most lines or the most strenuous dance routines. The other adults, which are primarily composed of Cherokee tribal members and students from WCU are paid less. At the bottom of the scale are the youth performers. On pay day it was not uncommon to see people standing shoulder to shoulder holding their checks side by side to compare them.

Conflicts among the participants in the drama

Although John was able to secure new mattresses for the resident cast by purchasing a large quantity of used bedding at a discount from the local Ramada Inn, he had been less successful in getting someone to haul away the old mattresses. These were stacked up in the grass, propped up against trees, and dispersed willy-nilly around the backstage grounds. This condition persisted for close to two weeks. Some of the Cherokee teens had already claimed one of the dorm TV rooms as their personal hangout even though they did not live there. Their video games and DVDs scattered all about, soda bottles and candy wrappers only sometimes made it into the trashcans. A few made themselves a real nuisance by piling up the old mattresses into a crash pad, then diving off the second story. Others took to marking their territory with spray paint.

When John saw what was going on he blew his stack. “Get a camera, we’ll file a police report,” and he left in short order.

When the graffiti artist heard what had happened, he was pissed. “They’re being asses because Cherokees are in the drama now.” He was convinced that the presence of old graffiti in the dorm licensed him to make new tag. He could only see a double standard: whereas the

old cast got to run wild it is wrong now when the new cast does the same. Nevertheless he and his friends painted over the tag the next day. The video games stayed.

* * *

In the evening before the show I sat in on a meeting regarding the state of cast housing and the quality of life for the non-Cherokee resident cast. It started out about housing but once we were done talking about underage drinking, curfews, and graffiti the others present explored their general dissatisfaction with the show and its management.

“I’ve never worked for a more disorganized show.”

“It’s the bureaucracy. It takes too long for budgets to be drawn up and approved when quick action is needed.”

“Maintenance takes too long. And when they finally came I had to help them work on the sink, but at least they supplied the parts.”

For these three it seemed as if the poor quality of the cast housing and the having to wait for everything was symptomatic of what they perceived to be poor communication among the CHA leadership and their tendency to take too long to act or make decisions.

“James has been overwhelmed.”

“Hanay probably didn’t help.”

“Things could still turn themselves around this summer.”

“Only if people started taking responsibility themselves.”

“I’m a juried artist in the Santa Fe market. I’ve won awards for my work. I could build a new hoedown costume in a day. Instead I have to wait while the head costumer writes a budget to hire a seamstress. I can sew. I could build a costume if only someone would give me the money and ask me to do it.”

Each chimed in with their own stories beginning with, “I’ve never been a show that...” followed by whatever indignity they felt they were currently enduring.

There were complaints about compensation, mostly regarding the confusion of the first few weeks when some people wound up on the wrong pay tier. All felt that these issues would eventually be resolved though they were not optimistic about how long it would take. Mostly they were baffled that the local cast did not appreciate that someone with more experience and more time on-stage could legitimately demand a higher pay. They all roundly criticized the contracts they signed as the worst any had ever seen, even alleging that several people signed blank contracts.

One asserted it was bad idea to implement a fine policy for bad behavior such as missed entrances, eating in costume, and wearing street clothes underneath costumes, “People are already getting paid peanuts. They’ll start quitting if you fine them.”

They spoke of the need for more rehearsals, standing company meetings, better communication, and clearer, fairer rules. This was especially the case when it came to dealing with a cast composed of so many amateurs and a great number of children.

* * *

One evening before the show James addressed the cast and crew in a company meeting, “The folks in the show on Monday pay the same price as the people on Sunday. They deserve the same show. It may be the same old show to you, but it’s a new audience every night.” He offered notes on the Tecumseh scene and instructed the crowd scene actors to be more animated. Everyone needs to move more quickly between the scenes and the singers need to give their rendition of Amazing Grace more “umph.”

James is adamant that all minors leave the backstage area after the show is done. “If you’re not twenty-one and you’re drinking and I find you, you’re done for,” and some of the adults applauded him. He continued his disciplining by telling everyone to stop dropping their Coke cans in the ditch, to use the ashtrays provided in the smoking areas and to stop flicking their cigarette butts into the road. Once he finished, people started asking questions about work permits, costume repairs, and even specific scenes.

Cindy speaks up concerning something that is on the forefront of everyone’s mind. “Can folks tone down their attitudes?”

“And say please,” Tooter added. “The majority of us are adults.”

One source of sour feelings among the cast is a pervasive feeling among some Cherokee directed at White production staff and crew that they are being talked down to or otherwise treated with disrespect. These sentiments have been reported to me but I was unable to observe this behavior myself. It seems to be part of a cultural perception, this sensitivity that I am not privy to. What I have observed is that the Whites in leadership positions in stage management, costumes, and props have been curt as they strive towards achieving their goal of producing the best show possible. I do not see why the Cherokee find

it so insulting that certain pleasantries be set aside in a work environment. I did notice that when James addressed us last Friday everyone paid attention to what he said. The atmosphere among the cast was more attentive. After that talk, the performance went really well like it had given people an extra boost. Not only did James tell the cast what they needed to hear, he told them in the way they needed in order to hear him. Even though James outranks the cast members in the drama's hierarchy he is able to speak to everyone.

* * *

Cast-written requests jotted down on "Backstage Concerns" list, posted in the break area:

Printer short of toner
Please wash stained cloths, even if it's off schedule
Out of water
Can the sand be fully raked before Act II? I twisted my ankle a bit and darn felled
Request to hang fans from bridge for more air circulation. It's only going to get
HOTTER!
Costume manager needs to be replace
Put a TV monitor on bridge
Water on the bridge
Not enough "good job" too much negativity backstage – too many DON'TS and
DO NOTS. I'm afraid to breathe
Don't make announcements until we have a had a chance to get to the dressing
rooms

* * *

On the dry erase board outside the costume shop:

A note to all cast members: Please be in costume, with your changes hung on the racks by 8:00 pm. In the event that you are missing a costume piece this gives us time to do something about it. After 'places' if you are missing a piece of clothing there is very little that I can do about it. Thanks.

* * *

The show had just begun and we were all in the dressing rooms either getting into costume or else waiting around for the opportunity to move down to the bridge for our cues. Gatlin and Kiah were singing along with Paula Nelson in the pre-show as it carried over the loud speakers and I took out my video camera to shoot them. Instantly they were both cutting up and afterwards we rewound the tape to watch what came out. Two of the AIDT dancers were there too and one made a joke about me spying – maybe I am recording stuff up here and then showing it to James when I go to work in the offices. It was definitely cracked as a joke, but it was serious play so I took the opportunity to spell out my procedure more clearly.

“I’m not interested in personality conflicts and the backstage conflict.”

“It’s bound to happen with a cast this big,” was his reply.

Perhaps this was a bit of a fib because what anthropologist is not interested in conflict? To clarify for the reader I was not interested so much in the substance of the conflict: what provoked people to fight, naming names and making some people look foolish. I was not interested in blaming certain parties for their failures or in taking sides. In fact I avoided participating in the conflict whenever possible, as I tend to do in my ordinary life outside of “the field,” even if I did lend a sympathetic ear to various parties. But I did find it very interesting that interpersonal conflict was such a typical activity in this workplace and I wondered what was at the root of it all.

* * *

“James is in over his head,” one of the dancers explained to me. “He does not know enough about being a producer to do the job. When Hanay got here he took him over to

Western Carolina University to meet fifty college students,” who were all non-Indians.

“That’s exactly what they’re trying to get away from,” he exclaimed.

This disgruntled cast member continued with a description of what he perceived as the poor quality of the show’s music and costumes. He and another dancer debated the skill of the wardrobe designer, “He has never worked on a show of this scale,” they said and was not able to produce costumes that fit Hanay’s vision in time for the show. The subsequent time crunch prompted Dmitri to reuse old costumes again falling back into, “going back to what they are trying to get away from.” Leah, the non-Indian costume shop manager, was criticized less harshly. “She’s not a seamstress,” meaning she did not have the requisite skills to fill her job but had been placed there only as a kind of stop gap measure. However neither was let off the hook as neither one had, “taken their game to the next level.” Instead the show was stuck, “sustaining mediocrity.” This returned to a critique of James who they believed to be more interested in making it through the summer than in making the show the best it can be. The less experienced James would have produced a better show if he had left greater creative control to the director and his experts.

Part of the backstage social scene at the drama is a constant back-biting and opinionated accusations about who lacks talent, who makes too many demands, who is not trying hard enough. Everyone is willing, eager even, to find fault in the work of others. As a theater outsider it is hard for me to gage who is better than whom because they all seem relatively better than me.

* * *

The non-Indian stage crew had similar concerns pivoting on a perceived lack of “professionalism” among the Cherokee. One afternoon I found Wes, one of the properties managers, in a fume over his latest chore: the installation of curtains backstage to be used for quick changes. Previously actors had made their costume changes in the open with the greatest priority given to expedience. Now there was a rumor circulating as to the reason for this sudden and mandatory requirement of curtains. Allegedly tribal social services demanded that the curtains be put in place because they had received an earful from an irate parent of a youth cast member who was furious that their child was being exposed to the sight of adults in their underwear changing in and out of costume. At issue for Wes was that people not in the show, friends and family members of the Cherokee cast, were wandering around backstage during the performance. As he told this story all of the non-Indians gathered that afternoon drinking soda and smoking cigarettes agreed that it was unprofessional and a distraction. Additionally, Wes was annoyed that the complaining parent went through improper channels to have their concerns addressed. He portrayed himself as largely sympathetic to family concerns and the concerns of amateur performers but he insisted, to the point of outrage, that such problems be brought directly to the theater and not to some external tribal agency. His feeling was that what should have been an easily addressed concern was instantly turned into a crisis because the parent contacted the local government.

Of course, what went unaddressed was any recognition of why a Cherokee parent might be reluctant to approach him or why Cherokees might hold different opinions of which channels were the “proper” ones to go through. Cherokees often go first to the people they know or whomever they think can get the job done.

Backstage conflict over the content of the drama

After getting dressed, I sat out on the bridge next to Mike Sr., a handsome old devil usually seen smoking and drinking McDonald's coffee. I enjoy being in Mike's presence because he reminds me of my mother's uncles. I brought up the One Feather and mentioned the good letter we got printed in the local paper. Cherokee opinion of the new drama is one of the primary topics of backstage conversations.

"Did you see that Rants and Raves?" Mike asked. "One old guy said, 'The historical needs to go back to the old one. This one's boring.'" He paused. "I wonder who that was? I would've told that guy, 'Kiss my ass. You don't know nothing.'"

Mike used to be in the old show as White Path and understudy to Elias Boudinot, who he got to play for a couple of weeks. He told me a story about asking the director to get his "picture in the paper," meaning to have a headshot run in the program rather than just being a name. "He mumbled something and turned away," Mike recalled. "I thought, 'I guess he doesn't want to show my picture.'"

"It really wasn't the Cherokee's drama back then," I said.

Mike just shook his head. "I guess it belonged to the University of North Carolina. That's where most of them came from."

* * *

Tonight I will make my debut as a Clan Spirit representing the Wolf clan for Stephanie, James fills in as the Long Hair clan for Will. Every detail was going smoothly

until the finale when I made my stage entrance way too soon. On stage I might have looked goofy but afterwards in the backstage nobody gave me crap about it. Instead I got compliments on my breakdown when the Clan Spirits get to do a solo improvisational dance during the finale.

“I don’t think you could shake that rattle any harder,” Jason said. “I was lovin’ it for you.”

The night before had been a photo shoot and I had gone over all of Stephanie’s moves. This mask had much better visibility than the Booger mask and the ultra-suede costume is not as hot as being buried under the Booger’s shapeless blanket tunic. Being a Spirit is easy by comparison and since our faces are obscured by the masks the other Spirits are able to whisper instructions to me on stage.

That night as I was sitting on the bridge during the contemporary Eagle dance Zahay approached me and sat down. “Want to know a secret? I hate this song and I hate this dance,” he said sarcastically. Zahay is upset that the traditional Eagle dance has been trimmed while the contemporary version was expanded to include a routine developed for the AIDT group. Exasperating him even further Hanay changed the music for the dance so that the live musicians were no longer being utilized. Instead a prerecorded piece, which happened to be sung in Lakota, was being used.

“I thought this show was supposed to be Cherokee,” he says defiantly, although he concedes that once Hanay leaves town again, “We could always change it back.” We laugh conspiratorially.

I share with Zahay my disappointment that the Children's Suite keeps getting cut. The night previous Hanay had John-John take the tempo up ridiculously fast to make the scene shorter. It sounded odd to my ear to hear him sing at that beat. Zahay is disappointed too, "Does he want people to get home three minutes earlier?"

Then he answered his own question with a complaint about the hoedown. "That's not Cherokee," he charged. Zahay's opinions are indicative of a broader debate within the local cast about the various segments of the drama and what is and is not Cherokee. Hybridity has little cache among some individuals, especially when longer running times are provided to numbers like the hoedown and Hoop dance while the traditional dances get trimmed or cut altogether.

Our conversation was cut short by the Removal scene where I am a U.S. soldier processing the Cherokees from stage left to stage right. After the Cherokees are gone Zahay appears as a Booger peering out from the bushes, curiously wondering where the Principal People have gone.

During Act Two in that very same spot on the bridge James and I were both dressed as Clan Spirits and we had the same discussion. We began by discussing the new contemporary Eagle dance, James mentioned that it looked hard and that he did not think his knees were strong enough to last through it.

"Everybody's talking about it," I said.

"What are they saying?" he inquired pointedly. I was taken aback, forgetting James' need to have an ear tuned to gossip.

I back pedaled. “Some love it, some hate it,” vague but true. James was looking at me hard and so I began plugging in Zahay’s words as my own and picking up on where he was in concordance with James. He seemed to agree that the hoedown was too long and that trimming it would allow for more time in the traditional dances.

Later I met with Zahay again and told him what I did. He hailed me with, “You’re awesome,” and we bumped fists.

* * *

We have begun implementing modern dress at the show’s finale, which is supposed to signify that the drama concludes in the contemporary era. I asked Lloyd about it the other day and he said, “I’m not sure. I’m still making up my mind.”

In the dressing room I asked Beaver his opinion. He definitely does not like it, “People pay to see a show. Not us in our street clothes.”

When he asked my opinion I affirmed that I like the modern dress in the finale because it echoed similarities between Cherokees and the rest of America. He nodded thoughtfully but made no further remarks. It seems that a lot of people are taking a wait and see attitude toward the topic.

If the classic drama placed the Cherokee in a particular historical context, the new drama sought to make that context less historical but more cultural. Hence underscoring Cherokee uniqueness and difference has been an important theme. Closing the drama on a resemblance to modern America, even if it is an obvious observation that contemporary Cherokee dress as contemporary Americans do, is a little unsettling for some.

The backstage social scene

It is show time, everyone is in costume and some of the youth performers are sitting backstage sharing a Mountain Dew while they talk. One boy is bragging about how his family speaks Cherokee to his baby brother saying that when he was grown the baby would be “bad” when it came to his prowess in speaking the native language.

“When he grows up, he’s going to have a speech impediment,” one of the girls argued. “If his first language is Cherokee, when it comes to English he’ll be slow. That’s the way my aunts and uncles are. Besides who’s he going to talk to? Your Grandma?”

We talked more about one of the boy’s fighting records as a schoolyard brawler, which he attributed to being a “Big Cover.” Everyone pegged him as a cigarette smoker, something he denied saying, “No, I play sports.”

The water cooler is out of water and the soda machine is mostly sold out of cans. One of the girls showed us how if you punch the machine just right it spits out a nickel. As the scene ended and the Clan Spirits came up the bridge, some of the youth realized they had missed their entrances because of the conversation. The Spirits were sorely disappointed to find there was no water.

As far as summer jobs go *Unto These Hills* provides Cherokee youth with a particularly significant social scene. All of their high school cliques and hierarchies are transplanted into the work environment. I have already witnessed one teenage couple break-up as well as one pair of friends feud and eventually make up over nachos. Regardless of the

ideology behind revamping the drama and retelling the Cherokee story in a way that is relevant to tribal members, and regardless of the need to make the drama profitable again so that it leaves a positive impact on the reservation economy, the performance of the drama by Cherokee actors is always embedded in a local social scene. Among the grown-ups it is about family and factionalism. Among the kids it's the dating scene and cliques.

* * *

It is raining so hard that by show time, 8:30 pm, no one is in costume. We are all assuming that the show will be canceled, certainly the AIDT performers in my dressing room are nonplussed about the inclement weather. Doug regales us with stories about dancing powwow in the rain and even taught me a heel-toe step. Josette stands in the doorway laughing at me good naturedly as I attempt to follow along.

We wait and wait for the rain to break. I talk with Pat a good deal, play around with Kiah and Gattlin, hang out with Ollie, Marci, and Punky, then Mike and Porky, and finally Keaw'e and Zahay. After 9:00 pm most of us have given up on hanging out and are hiding in our dressing rooms with the door closed, trying to avoid anyone from management who might force us into costume. The rain delay is boring but it is fun to socialize and wish for a rainout. Periodically Katie comes on the loud speaker to make announcements but the rain persists. When the precipitation relents to a drizzle she announces that we will go in "rain tempo" and we are all surprised the show will go on at this late hour. Performing at rain tempo was actually quite exciting and the show was very good that night.

* * *

Again it rained all day today but just in the nick of time the clouds parted and we went on. I got to be a Booger too. Backstage everyone is very supportive of my Booger performance. They tell me, “good job,” and laugh at me when they see me dressed. Some of the kids tell me to get fat, the other Boogers are all big men, or to wear a gourd Booger mask instead of a hornet’s nest mask which makes me look different than the rest. I’ve been working on my “expression” too. I begin by taking an exaggerated drinking swig and sometimes follow it with a mimed vomiting. I do not know where this came from, I just did it one night and it stuck.

Waiting for the show to begin I am perched on the bridge writing notes. Two girls walk past, “Whatcha writing?” I show them my notes and they tell me about their English grades.

Doug strolls by next, “Writing in your diary? Better be cool, in case you’re writing about me.” And he gives me a sideways glance as we laugh.

* * *

Another night as the spirit of the Wolf Clan but this time Jason wears the Long Hair mask. Whereas the last time I got high praise for my dancing during the Clan Spirit breakdown, consensus is that Jason is the better dancer.

Doug teased, “Man, Jason beat you bad.”

Jason took it all in with glee, “Yeah! I was doin’ the Swim, the Mash Potato.”

I got in on the joke too, “Well excuse me if I’m not a professional dancer in the American Indian Dance Theater.”

They all smiled and Doug came back with, “I thought you were going to say ‘White.’”

“Me too,” Jason smirked.

I even did the Robot, damn it!

The next night Jason and I were both going on as Clan Spirits and it would be a fierce competition on stage. Even before the show Jason was boasting about the moves he was going to bust and I knew I was going to have to elevate the game or face dressing room towel snaps again. I vowed to Pop and Lock. When the finale came Lloyd joked that he was going to step back so Jason and I could go at it. Then the breakdown came and I shook it. Made the Pop and Lock, felt good.

Back in the dressing room Justin declared, “You got annihilated. Again!” Jason got huge props for pulling an air guitar with his leg. The kids crowded around him telling him which dances to do the following nights.

I had to admit, “You know you’re king, Jason. You get requests, I get nothing.”

Doug joked back, “He gets requests. You get suggestions.”

* * *

The other night in the dressing room the boys were playing with an issue of Sports Illustrated I had left for folks to read. They had turned the page to an advertisement for the National Football League that featured a bikini model.

“Oh yeah,” the youngest boys cut up. “She wants me.”

Doug and Jason took up the joking atmosphere and started talking about the model's physical charms. Since it was a lighthearted atmosphere and I was a young man among young men I decided to proceed with swagger.

“What is it about you Indians and White women?”

Jason bulged his eyes and smiled, “Oh we're just saving up till we're fifty.” He jabs Doug in the ribs who is chuckling and continues saying, “Right? Older Indian men and young White women, for some reason. You have a kid young to propagate your race. Then when you're older, you see older Indian men with White women. Younger. White. Women!”

Doug explains, “They don't marry Indian women 'cos they don't like getting beat up.”

“They beat you,” Jason laughed and Doug nodded.

Earlier that evening Jason was telling us that he'd called his mom and she asked him, “Do I have any Cherokee grandchildren yet?” He laughed and rocked back on his heels. He has been dating one of the local Cherokee girls who's youngest sister is also in the cast.

She's always asking him, “Do you like my sister? You're funny looking.”

* * *

Tonight was just one of those nights. Nathan was called away on a family emergency so with Anthony out of town and me as a Clan Spirit that left only three American soldiers for the Battle of Horseshoe Bend and Removal. We had to pull Anna from props and put a uniform on her and cut all of Andrew Jackson's scenes. Lloyd was out too and was replaced by Greg. Stephan was sick so there was no Tecumseh. Keaw'e turned his ankle while on

stage during the first act, putting him out for the Act Two. Jason pulled a muscle at the gym that afternoon and could not do his dances. Jane's microphone batteries went dead and she missed her entrance. I could go on, but the less said about that night's performance the better.

* * *

Tonight Kiah took to rifling through my bag again. Here I keep my video camera, a digital camera, a voice recorder, spare batteries, my current field notebook, a hip pocket sized steno pad, 3"x5" note cards, three pens – black, blue, red – and a pencil. Usually a package of peanut butter on cheese crackers rests on top. It would be a devastating financial loss if it were to be stolen while I was on stage but I was never given any reason to be suspicious of anyone and no one ever bothered it. Kiah was the exception and I think he liked to touch the bag to see if he could get under my skin. Occasionally I let him borrow the camera but tonight he was reading my field notes.

"You know the polite thing to do would have been to ask first."

"Did you write anything today?"

"Yes, I write something pretty much every day." He read some while I dressed then he got bored and pulled out the flip book, which I had lent to him yesterday, to see what he had written himself.

A smile crossed his face as he read his own notes. "This was boring yesterday, but today it's funny."

“Yeah, that’s the general idea,” I told him. He filled another page with his notes and took some video shots. I told him I would write a grant someday and hire him as my research assistant, he looked up at me perplexed. I might as well have spoken Latin to him.

Justin entered, already in costume, and was doing his Ray Kinsland impersonation. Gently pinching people on the shoulder with his thumb and pinky, he told us all “stay in school.”

“This is how Ray Kinsland is, right? He’s got some fingers chopped off and he squeezes you like this. ‘Stay in school. Stay in school.’”

Justin’s parody of the beloved community leader instantly launched me into a story from my youth about how my high school calculus teacher, Ed Davis, had no right forearm which all of his students referred to as “the nub.” I told Justin how if you missed your homework or did poorly on a test Mr. Davis might grab your throat and punch you in the stomach with the nub or pin you against the wall and rub the nub in your face.

Justin screamed, “Oh! The nub juice!” and paraded me around the backstage making me retell the story three additional times. Beyond Justin I nubbed Gatlin, Zahay, Mike, and Porky.

After the silliness I had a good conversation with Mike who is a rising sophomore at Cherokee high. He was looking forward to graduation because then he would receive his per cap. Zahay, who overheard us, said he wished for no per cap so that people would simply graduate for the sake of graduating. Mike told us, with obvious pride, that he was going to be the first in his family to graduate from high school. Others had either dropped out or earned the GED.

The show was rained out that night.

* * *

Tonight our battle scene is missing Indians as both Porky and Mike are out. Anthony and I adlibbed some changes in the dressing room since we would not have any adversaries on stage we would need to be seen doing something. While I was writing notes Punky, Ollie, and Marci stopped by to read them. I let Punky write some too.

“I like how you write,” Marci said. “It’s all fancy.”

A flash flood blew in and knocked out the lights. No show tonight. Instead I spent time running around with Kiah, Gatlin, and a microphone.

* * *

After the final performance we were treated to a catered meal from Granny’s Kitchen: fried chicken, cabbage, greens, bean bread with grease, and potatoes. There was sweet tea and banana pudding for dessert. Mike summoned me to sit with him and I squatted on the wall at stage right near the pit with Porky, Beaver, and Doug’s family. He said the bean bread tasted like tar to him. It was pretty bland, even with the grease. Regardless I ate too much and it got late. Everyone was taking pictures, laughing, and exchanging telephone numbers. I was tired and hate goodbyes. Since I did not want to stick around and nobody was inviting me to leave with them I left on my own.

Working Affect

Emotional conflicts over allegedly transgressive behavior, a near constant sense of disrespect, gossip and local intrigue were all typical of the 2006 production of *Unto These Hills... a Retelling*. Beginning in rehearsal and carrying through to the final night of the drama's run there was a pervasive feeling among some of the Cherokees directed at the production staff that they were constantly being talked down to and treated with disrespect. I composed a survey for the cast and crew at Reuben Teesetuskie's request and the stack of fifty I set out were gone in a flash. People felt a need to vent and the survey responses capture some of that. At the end of the season each person seemed to have to endure their own trifling incidents that just irritated them more. Jane and Cochise, our lead actors, had to fight the CHA over who would pay to ship their stuff back home. Pat got a speeding ticket from tribal police. Folks were sore about having to help out on the "strike," the process of taking down all the stage properties and cleaning the dressing rooms before the theater is closed for the fall and winter. Management reprimanded us that our paychecks would be held and parties prohibited until everything was clean.

"Should we bring back the mold so it's the same way as when we got here?" somebody hollered.

Regina caught me setting out a second round of surveys, "Was that for you? Because I'd take back some of my comments if that was for you."

Why do people feel the way they do? Arlie Hochschild asks this question in her article, "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure" (1979) for it is not always a question of which grievances are at stake. Ethnography can provide insight into community

and socialization by looking at collective affective expressions. Hochschild's organizing premise of investigating what makes emotional display appropriate carries into an examination of the role of ideology in constructing the notion of "appropriate." Following Geertz (1973), ideology is theorized as a system of knowledge that shapes and is shaped by cultural practice which ascribes definitions and meanings to situations and, Hochschild adds, guides the assessment of the appropriateness or fit between a given situation and the emotions an individual experiences. The research question posed is not the psychiatric, "Why does the affect not match the situation?" but the sociological, "What social factors inform which is the appropriate affect to have?"

Hochschild argues that people work on managing their emotions, successfully or no, by suppressing inappropriate feelings and evoking desired absent ones under duress of social sanctions for violating cultural rules of how to feel. In this respect appropriate affective responses act in concert with a host of other markers in creating and maintaining the social boundaries patrolled by insiders and outsiders alike that distinguish and separate a collective from perceived others (Barth 1969). Individuals aid each other in their emotion management by forming groups for the circulation of backstage gossip, thus creating a social network of individuals whose sentiments mirror one's own. This sort of teamwork in creating and sustaining certain kinds of affect is illustrated in the payday activity of comparing checks and in critiquing the content of the drama by labeling certain aspects of it as "not Cherokee." People are aware that it takes work to conform to local standards of affective expression which among Cherokees includes showing restraint and respect for a person by avoiding direct confrontation or blatant criticism. More appropriate is to wait until the offending individual is gone and then converse with others to verify that their sentiments are in-line

with one's own. An example of this comes from the second day of the auditions when locals in the room acknowledged the effort involved in remaining silent while a youth played a drum improperly. Similarly, during the rehearsal and performance phases I would ask people their opinions about the drama but get only noncommittal, wait-and-see responses.

Through participant observation, fieldwork can document how social and cultural factors induce emotions and what people think and do about their feelings. Observable social contexts might include acts of labeling and interpreting situations, and managing emotion in reaction to those situations. In the case of the backstage social scene at *Unto These Hills... a Retelling*, 2006, I observed that participants sometimes explained this conflict in the workplace using racialized language. For example among antagonists, some Indians would cite the presence of a White employee in a certain position that they felt should be held by an Indian, some Indians would question the authenticity of other Indians' claims to a tribal identity, and some Whites would question a lack of "professionalism" and work ethic among Indians. However I am not convinced that "race" is a significant social factor in explaining backstage conflict even though it is one that participants frequently replied upon. Underlying these remarks are more substantial differences such as whether one is an amateur local community member or a trained theater professional from outside. This distinction is exacerbated by the history of conflict between Cherokees who live locally and with tribal possession of the land the theater is on and performers who live backstage on Cherokee land but removed from the Cherokee community.

Throughout this research report I have documented the many ways in which the Eastern Band Cherokee have attempted to lay claim to and exert sovereignty over the drama, predominantly by means of addressing the ways in which their culture and history are

represented. This is not the full extent of the Cherokees' project however because, as both the social conflict and camaraderie in this chapter illustrates, there are also many ways in which they are laying claim to the Mountainside Theater as a significant place on their reservation. In part this includes defining what the theater will be like as a workplace. For the professional theater experts all of their actions were aimed at one goal, putting on a professional dance performance. Friction arose when they were thwarted in their attempts to achieve that goal because of local refusal to defer to their expertise. If professional performance can be defined as "everything FOR performance," community performance distinguishes itself as "everything AND performance" (Kuppers 2007, Kuppers and Robertson 2007). While commercial profit and artist achievement clearly play important roles in *Unto These Hills... a Retelling*, the drama serves many other ends including increasing access and exposure to theater in the Cherokee community. Thus the process of staging the drama is just as important, possibly more important, to the Cherokee community than the product shown on stage. This shows how social conflict in the backstage is less an outcome of antagonism among "races" and instead hinges more on one's approach to theater as a professional on the one hand, or as a local community member on the other.

Some have suggested to me that since the Cherokee were for generations barred from addressing their concerns about how to change the drama that, when finally given the chance to do so, some locals used the drama as an opportunity to release pent up aggression. Similarly, it is not unreasonable to argue that because the new drama is such an important public venue for collective self-definition for the Cherokees, participants were constantly made aware of their affectivity and were thus highly sensitive to perceived social violations. I find both these explanations to be intuitively compelling, especially the latter in terms of

explaining Cherokee conflict with the CHA, but additional research is necessary. I have come to appreciate how casting a theatrical performance can be an art form in itself. In a professional stage performance a person's talent is of paramount importance while in a community performance like *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* equally important is the need to select personalities that will work well together, which given the time constraints placed on the 2006 production was a luxury the director could not afford. Perhaps the production staff hoped, and they would have been justified in doing so, that the Cherokees would be more invested in the performance as a chance to grow as artists under the tutelage of more skilled performers. Notably this did happen for some. However the drama casting would have played out differently if locals rather than outsiders had been the ones making the selections. James Bradley claimed that he "knew" which people would not work out and would be trouble. Since the 2007 season the CHA management and the drama's new production staff lead by director Eddie Swimmer have taken great interest in selecting actors and dancers not only based on their talent and potential but on their demeanor as well. The point being not only to produce a terrific and entertaining show, but to build a group of performers that will be a part of the Cherokee community.

“We’re not just a casino tribe”: On living with cultural tourism

This is the dilemma. We want to tell our stories, but we don’t always know our stories.
Paul Chaat Smith (2007:385)

Narratives are not only structures of meaning but structures of power as well.
Edward Bruner (1986:144)

Cherokee, North Carolina, is a tourist town and while not everyone is employed in the tourism industry, tourism does touch everyone’s life in ways great and small. Tourism has played a vital role in Cherokee’s economy since the early twentieth century and the reservation has been dependent on tourism as its main source of income since the advent of *Unto These Hills*. Today many Cherokees look back fondly on the drama’s heyday as a time when the reservation held great appeal for families vacationing with children. In the contemporary scene Harrah’s Cherokee Casino dominates as both the largest employer west of Asheville and the largest single tourist attraction in the state. While the opening of Harrah’s in 1997 was controversial (Oakley 2001), Cherokee attitudes toward the casino have since grown more positive and far fewer people question it now. While others are strongly supportive of the casino some Cherokees are merely tolerant of gaming and refuse to embrace it. “We’re not just a casino tribe,” I was told. Instead the cultural attractions were pointed to as something Cherokee people could relate to and the kinds of tourists those attractions drew to the reservation were seen as preferable to those who only gambled.

Much as Oakley found with the debate surrounding large scale gambling, there was a firestorm of criticism regarding *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* that weakened considerably in the following years until wide scale concern about the drama was eventually replaced by other topics. In this concluding chapter I will discuss some of the local opinions about the classic drama that may have informed the way the new show was received. Next I provide examples of both Cherokee and tourist responses to the show, followed by an interpretation of what these reactions might tell us about the way people understand and interact with the past. Finally I provide an epilogue describing how the CHA moved to address the concerns raised by its multiple audiences in the 2007 and 2008 shows.

“Tourists” and “Locals”: Perform solidarity and exclusion

James Clifford in *Routes* (1997) argues that culture and identity are not necessarily rooted in a single place but can be forged in transit. This extends to a critique of ethnography where “the field” is no longer a neatly bound discrete unit but is instead a constant movement between nodes themselves nebulous and without clear beginnings and endings. These debates are relevant in Cherokee, North Carolina, where distinctions between insider and outsider, local and tourist, host and guest resist easy definition. Here I will briefly touch on the blurred boundaries between the socially constructed categories of “tourist” and “local.”

A tribal member who lives in Cherokee, North Carolina, has unimpeachable credentials to “local” status. Yet there are Cherokees who live in other places while retaining a privileged status that marks them off from tourists such as tribal members who live on or near the Indian land not contiguous with the reservation such as in Robbinsville, North

Carolina. People who grew up on the reservation but now live off it also have some claim to local status by virtue of the relationships they keep with family and friends on the reservation. Other special non-tourist groups include tribal members who were raised off the reservation, Whites and non-Whites with family ties to tribal members, the unenrolled children of tribal members, and members of the United Keetoowah Band and Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma are all accorded varying degrees of belonging.

Among some Cherokees inclusion or exclusion of local status for non-Cherokees may also move along geographic and tribal axes. Everyday social transactions might occur with non-Indians in Jackson and Swain counties that gives them a sense of familiarity, with some prestige imparted to non-Indians with a multi-generational family history in the surrounding area. Proximity to the reservation is generally considered an asset and distance from it a liability, although there are preferences among Cherokee individuals as to which off-reservation destinations are most desirous or deleterious. A different recognition is given to non-Cherokee Indians that marks them off from tourists. Some Cherokees allow an additional cultural capital to southeastern tribes, followed by other eastern tribes as distinct from western tribes. Western tribes, Alaskan natives, and native peoples of Latin America are all fully embraced as Indians especially at events such as powwows where the pan-Indian theme is legitimated. If these people are set apart from the category “tourist,” things are further complicated when we acknowledge that any of the above mentioned may act as tourists by participating in touristic activities such as patronizing certain attractions or performing certain activities like picture taking.

People who do not live on the reservation may visit if for a variety of reasons, but only some of these people are tourists. Some travel to conduct business on the reservation or

to visit family and friends, giving them access to more private spaces off limits to tourists. Certain types of transient people, such as those traveling the powwow circuit or who work seasonally at the drama, may become familiar over time by growing friendships with locals. True tourists are those people who come to the reservation solely in order to spend their money and leisure time doing pleasurable things. Cherokees recognize a variety of different types of tourists and cater to them in different ways. Recreational tourists come to experience Cherokee's natural resources by fishing, picnicking, swimming, and enjoying the outdoors. Certain organized events will draw large groups around a single theme – both Harley Davidson and hot rod enthusiasts come *en masse* on different occasions. Tourists interested in Cherokee history and culture will seek out the cultural attractions and shop for souvenirs including art and jewelry that they think is representative of American Indian and Cherokee culture. Tourists may combine any of the above activities into a unique itinerary, including bingo and the casino where they might, in the words of one tribal member, “play a roll of quarters.” However, some Cherokees make a distinction between these tourists and those who primarily gamble, such as high rollers who spend several thousand dollars per stay at Harrah's and seldom leave the casino.

Cherokee anticipation of the new show

Prior to the debut of *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* and while working at the CHA I set out to collect Cherokees' general opinions about tourism in their community through a standardized questionnaire. I began by writing a list of questions I thought relevant and then sought out feedback from the management in the CHA. My supervisors directed me to ask additional questions that they felt might yield useful information or that they were simply

curious to learn about. I was provided with a CHA logo to affix to my survey and I planned on recruiting respondents at Granny's Kitchen and LIFT coffeehouse. As I implemented the survey I continued to fine tune the wording of questions and omit others in order to reduce the time commitment required of the respondent to about ten minutes. I would approach individuals, tell them briefly about the purpose of the survey, and ask if they were interested in proceeding. I had my survey on a clipboard and I would jot down the participant's responses as I asked the questions orally. Four questions were on the state of cultural tourism on the reservation, eight questions on the classic drama sought out their experience and opinion of the show, and four questions probed their knowledge on the as yet unreleased new drama. After the successful completion of the survey I rewarded each participant, six males and four females between the ages of 14 and 65, with a two dollar gift certificate to LIFT, about the price of a cup of coffee.

In one respect everyone I spoke to agreed in their opinion that tourism in Cherokee is insufficiently themed around the cultural attractions. "For me it's mostly about the casino, especially the out of state advertising," said one. Another described interacting with tourists, "Most of them ask, 'Where's the casino?' Some ask what there is to do. I try to send them to the village or museum."

However this did not imply that all were dissatisfied with the current attractions, many listed the village and fairground powwows among their favorites. Others were at least moderately happy with what the tribe already had to offer or saw room for improvement with what was currently in place. Some were less enthusiastic about the reservation's current set up for cultural tourism saying, "We need more," and "I'm disappointed. They're just letting it die out." As one person put it, "There's not too much to do around here." Typically these

respondents were at a loss as to how the cultural attractions could be improved or what could be added to make Cherokee a more attractive destination although one local felt that, “today’s tourists expect a more authentic experience.” This suggests that although everyone had an opinion about cultural tourism, few people were empowered to imagine how their concerns regarding the focus of tourism in Cherokee could be addressed.

When asked to identify the most important problem with the cultural attractions those who were most satisfied with the current attractions cited a lack of advertising or promotion. “I don’t see any great problems,” was a common reply. “Maybe they could use more promotion. Marketing is a big issue.” Other comments referenced the quality of the existing attractions or their cultural and historical accuracy as when one person said that the cultural attractions had a problem with, “being accurate. The drama is highly inaccurate.” Related to this some people said, “Our attractions never change,” and “They’re too old. They’re out of date.” Others felt that a lack of “tribal support, community support, and money,” would have to be addressed first. “They’re not trying to do anything to help. They’re just worried about the casino.” One person even drew an explicit opposition between the cultural attractions and gaming, saying, “There is a lack of high quality authentic cultural experiences here in Cherokee. If the Eastern Band really stood up it would negate the effect of the casino.”

In general the people I spoke with felt that the tribal government cared about the cultural attractions “some” or “only a little.” While most thought that the tribal government gives a higher priority to the casino, one person allowed that, “Some [council] members are very progressive and put it high [on the agenda].” There was a vague awareness that “they’ve got a master plan they’re working on to make it less tee-pee-ish and more traditional.”

Nevertheless some others felt that attention to the cultural attractions were still getting short-shrift, “Not like they should, I don’t feel. They’re more worried about the casino.”

All the locals who spoke with me had seen *Unto These Hills* at least twice in their lifetime, a majority had seen it as recently as three years previous, and a few claimed to have seen it one hundred times or more. I asked each respondent to rate their enjoyment of the classic drama on a five point scale and the majority gave it good reviews as entertainment. However this appreciation was directly correlated with age, with the older generations tending to give the most laudatory reviews and the harshest criticisms coming from younger people.

I was interested to find that a large majority of the people who spoke with me felt that the historical and cultural inaccuracies in the classic drama were only somewhat of a problem. These people allowed that, “The drama is for entertainment purposes. It is exaggerated and rearranged.” Still others felt that, “It should be accurate.” One person cogently observed that *Unto These Hills* is “a wonderful opportunity to tell the story of the Eastern Band. But it’s more about the Nation in Georgia.” Turning the tables on me one person took the opportunity to make my question into a black irony, “Tourists don’t see the bad things. People don’t want to see the mass murder of a bunch of Indians. They don’t see the horror.”

When it came to enumerating the problems with the classic drama many issues were cited. “The quality of the performance – props and costumes,” said one. Another person took issue with how the drama was run, “Management and the governing board’s lack of future projection and lack of new people. They grew old.” The theater itself was singled out by

some, “The seats suck.” While others reserved their anger for the cast, “They don’t really care how they portray us. All the actors are kind of sloppy and they don’t do a good job.” Altogether these responses capture the difficulty facing the CHA in its attempt to satisfy the Eastern Band Cherokee audience with a new show. Not only did a lot of people profess to enjoy the classic drama, there were few agreements as to what part of the old show needed to be fixed first.

I presented each person with a hypothetical situation: how would you feel if the drama closed forever? The vast majority said they would be disappointed. “Theater is an excellent tool to get a message across. You can go to a museum, but people don’t read.” Others concurred, “I feel like it would be giving up on informing people. I think other people should see it.” Another person argued, “I think it would be a big mistake. It’s been here fifty-six years. A lot of people ask about the drama. It’s a tourist icon.” However some of the youngest people I spoke with claimed they would not care if the drama were gone, “I don’t care because I don’t think they ever did a good job to begin with.” If it could be said that a larger pattern emerges out of these interviews it is that there are marked generational differences in how Cherokees appreciate the drama. The younger people seemed to be more dissociated from the drama, seeing it as less entertaining and largely irrelevant to their lives. Generally speaking it was the older generations that see the drama as more entertaining, more important to Cherokee culture, and more relevant to their lives.

In the months leading up to the debut of the new drama I found that, barring individuals who had personal relationships with members of the CHA Board of Trustees, most Cherokee were totally in the dark about what was happening. Some were under the impression that the planned changes would be, or at least ought to be, relatively minor.

“Figure they’re doing a little renovation. Really not sure what direction they’re trying to take that,” one person said. “I hope nothing too fast,” said another, “I think gradual change would have been better. I’m leery. Usually they’ve had a rehearsal by now. Hadn’t heard a thing.” Others were expecting, “major changes, correcting the untruths, appropriate dress. The dances are going to be Cherokee.” The notion that changes would be made to the dances was pervasive, “They planned to have more authentic dancing included. I’ve heard there’s a couple of historical elements that are changed, but I don’t know what they are. Also it will be an all Native cast.”

Not everyone was aware that there were also organizational changes going on. However, “I just know they’re getting new management,” and “All I know is that another company is taking it over,” were both comments I heard. One tribal member even had the flow of power reversed and believed that the tribe had formerly owned the CHA and had now “sold” it to someone else, that it was the classic drama that had been produced by Cherokees and now the new drama was going to be made by outsiders. Rumors such as this circulated widely and some people were left with an uneasy feeling. “We’re kind of concerned that this one will be like the one in Tahlequah. It’s going to be a bad thing if it don’t work out.”

People had a lot of their own ideas of what they wanted a new play to be like. Some wanted only the barest departure from the classic show. In describing what he wanted for the new drama, one person said, “Quite similar to the old one in terms of staging. I like the idea of more authentic native dancing, native music.” Others saw the opportunity to focus on the land of the Qualla Boundary. “I want it to tell the story of the Eastern Band. Yonaguska and Will Thomas are more relevant than John Ross and Stand Watie or Sequoyah.” Many people only had broad general goals such as, “I want it to be truthful, culturally relevant. I want

Cherokee people in the drama and I want it to show the strength of the Cherokee.” Others simply admitted, “I don’t know.” However everyone was certain they would go see the new show that summer.

In sum, when asked what they wanted the new drama to be like, most people used the words “accurate” and “authentic” but with a hesitation suggesting they were not quite sure what that would mean on stage. There was some anxiety about how the new show would turn out. This nervousness is apparent in Cherokees’ desire to talk about the drama as even people who professed to know individuals in management positions at the CHA were not clear about what the new show would be like. People were also genuinely interested in seeing the new show, ranging from optimistic enthusiasm to guardedly curious. The opening of the new show was to be a highly anticipated event.

Cherokee reaction to the new show

One of the most thrilling aspects of being a stage performer with *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* was taking a bow with the entire cast and the audience, from several hundred to almost two thousand in attendance, rising to its feet and giving us a standing ovation. Because we heard a number of negative comments about the new show and talked about them at length in the backstage we always took great pleasure and comfort in live applause. For the cast and crew as well as the management a primary source of local Cherokee opinions of the show were the commentaries and letters to the editor published in the local newspaper, the Cherokee One Feather. In the summer of 2006 the Cherokee One Feather was experimenting with a new format called “Rants and Raves.” The format, while it lasted, was

very popular and its quips were a favorite topic of conversation. I even heard anecdotes from retailers about the increasingly rapid sale of the newspapers since the addition of Rants and Raves such was the attention it garnered from the local population. Published opposite the editorial page, Rants and Raves were short anonymously authored statements submitted by One Feather readers and they ranged over a wide variety of subjects including local gossip and politics. In the summer of 2006 Rants and Raves was also a forum for criticizing and praising the drama.

The letters to the editor have the advantage of being more detailed in the body of their prose. One letter writer admitted to feeling moments of uncertainty at the new drama's more intimate portrait of Cherokee culture, writing that initially, "I wasn't completely acceptable to the showing of certain dances." However she acknowledged the power of the symbolism which accompanied that representation, "When several of the clans walked off and joined those on the removal it was like a light bulb came on." The writer finally expressed the impact of this dramatic experience in gratitude for the stage performers and the production staff, "Hanay Geiogamah, and others that assisted in seeing this side of a story told, my hat is off to you" (Oxendone-Taylor 2006, June 14).

In a "Guest Commentary" column published on the editorial page another writer began by framing her experience of seeing the new drama in terms of her sentiment for the classic show. "I must admit last fall I too was sad and disappointed about the ending of the 'old show' ... I had spent many summer nights there as an employee and enjoyed the work and people I worked with, and was reluctant to accept the changes." The writer continues with language that elaborates upon her anxiety, "I was undecided" and "I was skeptical," about working for the new show. Yet it became easier to appreciate the show over time, "I

am glad I didn't give up on the 'new show' and gave it a chance." Ultimately this writer's evaluation of the show is closely bound up with her pride in the Cherokees performing on stage, writing, "As I watched the show I couldn't help but think, for the first time in our history that I know of, Cherokees and other Native people are finally doing the show" (McMillan 2006, August 16). Another "Guest Commentary" writer concurred, "I loved seeing our Cherokee dances being performed with the utmost respect, and it was wonderful to hear our Cherokee songs and the contemporary songs being performed by our native people" (Crowe 2006, August 16). This emphasis on Cherokee dance and the presence of Cherokee and other native performers were the most common forms of praise I heard.

Compared to the letters and guest commentaries the Rants and Raves have the advantage of being more numerous and they range over a wider variety of topics. Some came forward with what they saw as errors of authenticity in the new drama's representation of Cherokee culture and history:

This has to do with the so-called very good drama: What does the hoop dance have to do with the Trail of Tears? As far as the history I grew up with – nothing! (2006, July 5)

Since when did the Cherokee Women wear those kinds of dresses? If that was the case, then I understand why so many people say their Great-Great-Great-Grandmas are Cherokee. (2006, July 5)

I thought the Drama was supposed to be about the Trail of Tears and the history of what happened. History is what people want to hear and see. HISTORY. (2006, July 5)

Boogers, boogers, boogers! Is that what our culture and history are about? What a shame! Bring the old drama back. (2006, July 12)

Cherokee desperately needs fun family attractions for visitors... Let's send them away with lasting memories, something more than how goofy the boogers were at Unto These Hills. Its sad that the only thing people remember when they leave Cherokee are goofy looking boogers. (2006, August 9)

While criticisms of the Hoop dance were somewhat anticipated, rejection of the Boogers caught some at the CHA by surprise. The Hoop dance is commonly performed at powwows and other cultural exhibitions and several Cherokee dancers are renowned in their skill performing this particular dance. However because of this dance's association with powwow and western tribes it is not considered a "Cherokee" dance even when Cherokee people are dancing. Even among those who hold this dance in great esteem some Cherokees felt that the dances in *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* ought to be exclusively Cherokee and not mixed with pan-Indian dances. Regarding the Boogers, several Cherokee I spoke with emphasized that they are not an especially private part of the culture and that in years past they had even been displayed at Fall Indian Fair. Nevertheless some Cherokees felt that the clowning of the Boogers was incongruous with the sobriety of the Removal, as if this somehow made light of the seriousness of that event.

While some of the comments about the drama's shortcomings invited debate there were also those which lashed out with vitriolic and unconstructive criticism:

Instead of *Unto These Hills: A Retelling*, it's more like *Unto These Hills: Nap time!* Boring and poorly directed. In other words, it stinks. (2006, June 14)

We were sorely disappointed in the drama. Please get back to the original before it's too late. We've seen better high school plays. (2006, June 21)

What was once the beautiful production of *Unto These Hills* has become a childish substandard and ridiculous presentation of non-talent. Why this community has allowed the utter destruction of Kermit Hunter's work is beyond me. I am horrified to think that families will waste money and travel to see such a disaster. (2006, June 28)

For the CHA management these comments were some of the most frustrating and occasionally I was reminded that, because Rants and Raves were anonymously authored, some of these comments could have been left by non-Cherokees or that they could all have

been left by one cantankerous person. During my fieldwork I observed a degree of paranoia around the Rants and Raves as some community members felt that it was an unsavory airing of dirty laundry and probably something ridiculed by tourists. Indeed this concern was a contributing factor to the format's demise. However none of my encounters with tourists involved the Cherokee One Feather and it is my impression that it is a paper read primarily by locals. Yet not all the critiques the paper published were spiteful, some offered measured commentary on a number of issues pertinent to the process of updating the drama and the way those changes were staged:

I must say the drama wasn't what I expected it to be. I believe that it is too much for the tourists to comprehend. They are not familiar enough with our heritage to understand the play. (2006, June 21)

Whether you like the new *Unto These Hills* or not, you should be happy that more Indians are playing lead roles. At least this show is closer to the truth than the old one. Also keep in mind, this is the very first season for this show so it will take some time to work out the bugs. (2006, June 28)

Visitors have left the drama saying they didn't understand what it's about. Many locals and tribal members don't either. (2006, July 12)

I thought people wanted more history in the drama? Well guess what, there is very little history in it. The new show is pretty much based on dancing and dancing wasn't part of the Trail of Tears. (2006, July 12)

Privately the CHA management acknowledged that *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* was confusing in its narrative form. Hanay Geiogamah built his reputation on avant-garde theater (Geiogamah 1980) and, like many of the most renowned Native storytellers, utilized a non-linear, cyclical method for depicting events such that the past and present are meant to be interpreted as occurring simultaneously. This was a bit much for the outdoor drama audience, Cherokees and non-Cherokees alike, to accept. Compounding this was confusion surrounding some of the finer details of Cherokee history and culture. Both local and tourist subjectivities had been for

generations informed by the depiction of events in the classic drama. When the depiction of those events changed in the new drama, however “accurate” they claimed to be, they were rejected by some audience members. Finally the emphasis on dancing and the reliance on conveying meaning through choreography was rejected by some as mere spectacle that eschewed the significance of history as it was formerly told in “straight-forward” narrative.

Taking a more political stance, still others saw a connection between their dissatisfaction in the new drama and the change in management at the CHA:

Why is it that for 56 years nobody complained about *Unto These Hills* being a white man’s version of the Cherokee story? [Are they] saying that gold wasn’t found here? That Andrew Jackson didn’t betray the Cherokee? That Tsali didn’t sacrifice his life so that a remnant of his people could stay here? That the Cherokee’s weren’t forced from here to Oklahoma? Everybody involved in the old show worked well together and cared about each other. The old show and management need to be brought back. (2006, July 19)

CHA has completely lost sight of telling our story. They have become more concerned with numbers. I agree that the old script should have been amended. Why was the old script just thrown in the trash, why did the CHA not try to update the old script? I hope the CHA Board Members think about this. (2006, August 16)

I read these critiques as addressing the way in which the new CHA management was installed and the new script authored. When the old CHA suffered financial collapse in 2004 the tribal government acted quickly to bailout the organization and put tribal members in charge, but these actions were not preceded by substantial public debate about what CHA and *Unto These Hills* should become. After the new management was in place there was little information disseminated to the Cherokee public about what was going on at this important local institution and so rumors spread. During the writing phase a committee of locals was assembled to vet the script writing process and the non-Cherokee production staff did seek

out input from community elders. However some individuals I spoke with gave this process low marks because they felt that since not all of their suggestions were applied then their overall input must not have been highly valued even if other suggestions were accepted. Obviously writing a play by committee is a daunting, perhaps impossible task and it is just as unlikely that an entire community could ever agree on the way their past should be represented. Thus it was necessary from the beginning to limit community input and to be selective about what would be displayed. One result of this compromise was dissatisfaction among Cherokees directed at the Cherokee management of the CHA.

While there were also entries to the effect of “Congratulations” and “Good job to everyone involved,” others took issue with those who would write such criticisms presented above. It is my impression that some of these comments were written by cast members:

Why all the Rants and Raves about the newly revamped Unto These Hills? Did you really expect the newly created Native American cast to continue telling the non-Indian version of our story? I’m not willing to tell the non-Indian version. (2006, June 28)

I am so proud of our Cherokee people for having the courage to make a change. I loved that all the actors were Cherokee and that you put a lot of our traditions in the show. (2006, August 2)

For all those people complaining about Unto These Hills, the truth hurts, huh? (2006, July 5)

There weren’t enough people coming to see the old drama. So why don’t people know it couldn’t go on. It had run its course. (2006, July 26)

Give the new Drama a break. It’s new and finding its feet. With a 90 percent cast of Natives – most being Cherokee – look at it in a new way with new eyes. Where were you when this was in production? Not helping! (2006, August 16)

I see by the letters to the One Feather that some of our tourists and residents do not like the new Unto These Hills. Could it be that the story from the Native perspective is alien to these folks? The old one was like Dances with

Wolves where the Native Americans were the supporting cast and white folks saved the day. (2006, September 13)

In sum *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* received mixed reviews from its local Cherokee audience. While some critiqued specific aspects of the way the new drama represented Cherokee history and culture, others saw a connection between their dissatisfaction of the play and the way the CHA was being managed. A few were so moved by their dislike to attack the quality of the drama in the strongest language available to them. For those who enjoyed the beauty of the new drama's spectacle their praise doubled as a defense against its critics, who were depicted as short-sighted complainers that never lifted a finger. Overall the most common accolades I heard arose from a pride in seeing traditional Cherokee dance on stage and more tribal members in the performance.

Interpreting tourist reaction to the new drama

Throughout the summer of 2006 the complaints kept rolling in. We received angry phone calls from people wanting their money back and then read about our show in the op-ed columns of local newspapers. On one occasion an angry tourist got lost in the voice mail of our telephone answering system and wound up taking out his frustrations on our befuddled accountant, Chelsea. From my vantage point in the front office I was well positioned to participate in office gossip sessions where we would offer up theories to explain audience behaviors.

James, the general manager, opined, "Local people really like the show. I've received some constructive criticism," his tone was very satisfied, pleased to be receiving praise from

fellow Cherokees. “But some of the tourists who have been watching the show for thirty years are pissed. This is very interesting to me. People are saying the old show is more Cherokee than the new show.”

Here James paused for dramatic effect before dragging out the vowel on, “Nooo! The old show was your perception of us. This is who we really are.”

Dennis Yerry, a Seneca and accomplished jazz pianist, was music director for the 2006 show. He likened the situation to the issue of team mascots. “They say when they dress up in feathers and paint and go ‘Woo-woo-woo’ they are honoring us. And we say, ‘No you’re not.’ ‘Yes we are.’” Both cases illustrate how White definitions of Indians are primarily about establishing the boundaries of whiteness (King and Springwood 2001).

The 2006 show was a radical departure from the drama’s previous fifty-six years, which despite that half-century still reflected the 1950 Hollywood western stereotypes that produced it. One of the most important ways the CHA tried to better represent their people was by changing all the dances, substituting for the previous ballet and modern dance numbers a combination of traditional Cherokee dances with musicians singing in the Cherokee language and modern interpretive dances choreographed by Natives. The new drama was also recast such that the majority of roles went to Native actors most of them Cherokee amateurs. Many of the most garish costumes were thrown out and redesigned by Natives and the performers abstained from the use of the red colored Texas Dirt body makeup. The Cherokee language, which was only marginally included in the classic show, expanded its presence in the new show. Also the new performance alluded to more private aspects of Cherokee culture such as the clan system and the Booger spirits. Finally, the

conclusion of the show was completely changed from a melodramatic tragedy of the “vanishing Indian,” to a resounding celebration of perseverance.

As Philip Deloria has argued, Indians have not only served as oppositional figures against which an imagined civilized American self can be defined, but they were also imbued with important positive qualities to be emulated. This ambivalence is conveyed best by the trope of the noble savage. White colonial ambivalence to noble savagery can also be seen in the history of federal Indian policy as the United States alternated between plans to kill off all the Indians and plans to “save” them. Indians, Deloria writes, are “not simply useful symbols,” but “the contradictions embedded in noble savagery have themselves been the precondition for the formation of American identities” (Deloria 1998:4). I argue that White privilege was deeply invested in the particular representation of Cherokee offered by the classic drama and this privilege was severely jeopardized by *Unto These Hills... a Retelling's* move towards indigenous self-representation.

I want to explore further why some audience members wrote letters of complaint, a few even felt it was appropriate to send copies of that letter to Cherokee elected officials, local Chambers of Commerce, and the editors of multiple newspapers. These complaints were all taken seriously and phone callers were always treated professionally, but in private those of us in the CHA found some of the criticisms to be quite intriguing. The new drama provoked reflection on the part of Cherokees about tourists, about the relationship between the tribe and non-Indians, and how vacations to their reservation had become so influential in the constructions of tourists' identities. Many letters began with biographical statements which opened a door onto the letter writer's selective memories of the classic play. Often they would misquote lines, recall events that did not happen in the play, or criticize the new

drama for elements that were also present in the classic play. In addition to outlining these rhetorical devices here, I also explore three interrelated themes: ambivalence over the drama's status as a commercial tourist attraction, the belief that the drama has a higher calling or "mission" that justifies its existence, and a desire for tragedy that was left unfulfilled by the glorious, uplifting conclusion of the new show.

Personal histories and selective memories

Many of the letter writers indicated that they had a personal investment in Cherokee identity by means of a family story about Removal or a longstanding relationship with Cherokee as a tourist destination. Other letter writers went out of their way to elaborate on their personal contributions to the success of *Unto These Hills* by estimating the number of additional audience members they had brought with them. By providing these details, these writers probably hoped to lend their opinions extra authority. Another common trope and perhaps the most significant for our purposes here, is the tendency for these letter writers to situate their most recent experience of the drama in their childhood or young adulthood.

Having seen the drama as a child, then again with a date, in 1961, I have vivid memories and impressions of the enactments. We have a legend in our family of our great-great grandfather traveling to Oklahoma to bring his Indian girlfriend back to the mountains of North Carolina. (Confidential 2006, June 13)

Last week-end we made our seventh trip to Cherokee to view the historical drama 'Unto These Hills'. We had taken our children, our in laws, and friends. Now it was time to take our four grandchildren to enjoy a bit of history of people who once roamed our farmland in Polk County, NC. Our collection of artifacts is proof of their existence. (Confidential 2006, August 10)

I have been attending the play *Unto These Hills* for over 20 years. I have seen the play personally over 12 times. When I attend the play I bring at least 10 and have brought as many as 27 people with me because I want them to see the history of the Cherokee people and the story of the Trail of Tears. (Confidential 2006, August 15)

How could the drama that I saw so many years ago be minimized to this? As a 10 year old child, I was touched by their struggle, their courage, their triumph. As an adult, I was horrified by the rewritten version that left out the most important parts. (Jarrett 2006, August 23)

The main rhetorical principle in these excerpts is to establish the audience member's commitment to the classic drama and the importance of this vacation for them and their family members. Interestingly many of these comments framed the classic drama as more authentic and more Cherokee than the new drama.

This is truly sad, because it was one story that had held itself true in these changing times. Please rethink what you are doing and return the play back to what the original Cherokee people that started *Unto These Hills* wanted to say. (Confidential 2006, August 15)

Some audience members were under the impression that a return to the older version of the drama would be to return the play to the Cherokee community. Other critical comments suggested that some audience members believed that the White actors in red body make-up were the "real Indians." In the classic drama White and Indian actors alike used a reddish brown full-body make-up called Texas Dirt, which along with the costuming and aspects of the performance itself (such as speaking in the third person) presented audiences with a replica of what they believed "real Indians" to be. When Eastern Band tribal members took the stage in *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* without Texas Dirt they did not fit this stereotype and so were rejected by some audience members who thought they looked too White, too fat, too young, not noble, not savage – not what "real Indians" should be.

Nostalgia is a vital component to the way people find relevance in how history is told. In the comfort and predictability the above mentioned letter writer finds in *Unto These Hills* a shelter is constructed from a late capitalist world that thrives on instability. As Stewart puts it nostalgia is “a monument against instability, randomness, and vulgarity” (1988:230). As a form of desire nostalgia objectifies the present into something that can be refused or at least disrupted, granting a temporary sense of control through the agency of rejection. The disorientation and anger experienced by some audience members can be traced to this perceived loss of agency. Writing about tourism in Africa, Bruner makes a similar observation, “This is what power is about – the powerful are able to decide what stories will be told, by whom, in what discursive space, so that others in the system, such as the Africans, have to base their actions on what is essentially someone else’s story” (1991:241). Non-Indian audience members anticipated empowerment from the drama and their rejection of the new version can be read as one repercussion of decreasing influence over the control of narrative.

Ambivalence over commercialism

In the introduction to their volume on the complicated flows of postcolonial creativity, identity, and subsistence that circulate around the exchange of art between Natives and Westerners, Phillips and Steiner (1999) argue for a blurring of the boundaries supposedly separating works of art, ethnographic artifacts, and commodities. Although their focus is on objects such as souvenirs their argument can be fruitfully extended to Cherokee, North Carolina, where *Unto These Hills* and its sequels trouble presumed distinctions between

theatrical performance, ceremony, and tourist diversion. Phillips and Steiner acutely observe that objects which conceal their commodity status are typically embraced as authentic works of art or authentic ethnographic specimens, whereas objects that are easily identified as commodities typically fall into “the ontological abyss of the inauthentic, the fake, or the crassly commercial” (1999:4). Hence it was quite striking to those of us in the CHA business office to find that a common rhetorical device in letters of complaint was the slandering of Cherokee attempts to re-present their history as a just a flashy way to make a quick buck.

The actors were silly, simple-minded in their performances and without sincerity or respect towards the descendants. The reverence they should have shown to the parts they played proved how far you have commercialized and re-written the truth... It is with great sadness that you would forget the true meaning of the Trail of Tears, you have done a disservice to the Cherokee people and to the public from which you wish to make money... You should be embarrassed to charge money for this version of the history of the Cherokee people. (Confidential 2006, June 12)

Here the audience member not only believes the classic drama to be a more “authentic” representation of Cherokee history and culture, but her outrage is amplified by the theater’s need to support itself monetarily. The Mountainside Theater, like the Oconaluftee Village, the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, or the Qualla Arts Co-op, have all served their community as institutions of Cherokee culture while also being commercial endeavors. From its inception as the brainchild of the WNCAC the drama existed to make money. These are processes that have been set in motion for well over fifty years. Why was that economic objective unrecognized by some audience members until the play was rewritten? What spurs that moment of (mis)recognition?

The many popular cultural forms that shaped audience expectations all contributed to Indian stereotypes in different ways but a unifying theme is a temporal dislocation that

constructs Indians as in the past, what Fabian (1983) has termed a “denial of coevalness.”

The crux of Fabian’s critique of anthropology in *Time and the Other* is that the tendency for

Westerners to displace others temporally has and continues to have material consequences,

“In short, *geopolitics* has its ideological foundations in *chronopolitics*” (Fabian 1983:144).

Extending Fabian’s critique beyond anthropology to aesthetics, the rhetorical displacement of

Indians into the past contributes to contemporary social inequality because it is an attempt to

control the other, for example, in defining what roles one can fill in a tourist economy.

Perhaps the recognition of *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* as a commodity form and thus its

rejection as art is predicated on the audiences’ relationship with the classic drama’s narrative

of the American past, its situating the Cherokee people firmly in that past, and the genre

conventions of outdoor theater invoking a socio-cultural past rooted in middle-twentieth

century American culture. In short certain qualities of the new drama prevented some

audience members from engaging the racial-historical fantasies they were accustomed to

enjoying during the classic drama.

This experience of expecting something familiar but finding instead an excess that transforms it into something novel which fills one with loathing closely resembles Freud’s

notion of the uncanny. Some audience members did characterize their reception of the play

with revulsion saying that it was “disgusting,” that they were “horrified” by the changes

made, and now had “grave” concerns about the future of Cherokee. If the classic play was

familiar and agreeable it also kept certain things out of sight, Cherokee people notably, but

also White privilege. Freud writes that the uncanny is too a return of the repressed, “for this

uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-

established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of

repression... something which ought to have remain hidden but has come to light”
(1959:394).

Unto These Hills... a Retelling through the changes in its storytelling turned the tables on its non-Indian audience. Beginning his discussion of the uncanny by delving into the aesthetics of a story featuring a life-like human doll, Freud invokes a number of such instances where inanimate things seem alive and living things seem dead. We could include in this list body doubles, doppelgangers, mirrors, shadows, and ghosts. All things that look familiar but are not behaving in ways they are supposed to. Without declaring in the ethnographic present that the classic drama was necessarily uncanny in the Freudian sense for Cherokees it is easy to imagine a sense of bewilderment or at least dissonance at seeing a theatrical production that is labeled “Cherokee” and knowing that it is not. Yet some audience members, tourist and Cherokee alike, did accept the drama’s historical representation without reservation and over generations it came to constitute Indian and non-Indian identities and subjectivities. With *Unto These Hills... a Retelling*, Cherokee community leaders came forward and replaced the doppelgangers with Cherokee people, from their perspective they were righting a wrong. However some audience members had normalized the classic show and the new actors and the new script became the uncanny imposters.

The uncanny can help us think about why people sometimes accept art as an unproblematic, authentic representation and then on other occasions dismiss art on the grounds of being a mere commodity. The commodity nature of the exchange between host and guest must be “repressed” (Freud 1989) if the guest is to feel that he or she is engaging in an authentic cultural experience. In order to have a deep and profound experience at this

tourist attraction one not only has to suspend disbelief in order to enjoy the drama. Since many believe commodification to compromise claims to authenticity one must also repress any awareness that this meaningful display just beheld would not have been performed in the absence of tourists.

The drama should serve a higher purpose

Some audience members felt that rather than serving some instrumental economic function, the drama like a true work of art ought to have a higher purpose such as “preserving” Cherokee history and culture, “uplifting” the Cherokee people, and teaching “tolerance” to Americans facing a world of difference. In a wide ranging letter that likened *Unto These Hills* to Jewish memory of the Holocaust and South Africa’s post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation commission, one writer detailed what he saw as this particular aspect of the drama’s “mission.”

Where the new version fails miserably is that it fails to tell us about our sins. It fails to move us to anger, to outrage, to remorse, to righteous indignation. It fails to lead us to a determination to repent and to do something about the mess we’ve created, to work to change things. It fails to fire us up to work together, Cherokees and non-Cherokees, toward creating a just society for all members of the human family.

Unto These Hills has a mission to accomplish, and the new version fails miserably to accomplish that mission. Hunter’s version succeeded in accomplishing that mission, though only at the cost of playing fast and loose with history and giving Cherokee viewpoint short shrift. (Confidential 2006, June 19)

A reoccurring figure in fiction and film, the so-called Magical Negro is a common narrative device wherein a supporting Black character, through his humility and low station in life or even through access to some spiritual or mystical power, aids a White protagonist often by

prompting him to recognize his own faults and overcome them. Since the Magical Negro exists principally to help his White compatriot even to the point of sacrificing himself, his powers of insight or over nature are permissible and non-threatening. Something of this character form is visible in *Unto These Hills* in the wisdom of Junaluska and the death of Tsali.

The critic Christopher John Farley observes that this stereotype exists in popular film because, “most Hollywood screenwriters don’t know much about black people” (Farley 2000). That may be true and it certainly dovetails nicely with the imposition of the drama’s version of history by outsiders. But as this audience member’s letter suggests, the magical powers of Indians sacrificing themselves are not reserved for White characters on stage but are effective upon the audience as well. The Magical Negro and the Vanishing Indian do powerful social and cultural work by constructing audience national subjectivities as Americans who are sophisticated enough to recognize past inequalities but need a little help in getting over it. Thus, a final layer to this longing for the past and experience of the present as a kind of loss is the desire to return to a nation where the problems of “race” seemed fixable, a place in time where multiculturalism and the celebration of diversity seemed unproblematic and could be evoked without irony. Through an open-minded act of contrition Whites had the power to return the nation to the Enlightenment ideals of liberal equality laid out in the Declaration of Independence. For some this act of contrition required at least some emotional sacrifice on the part of the audience expressed as a desire for sorrow over the human tragedy and suffering of Removal.

An unfilled desire for sorrow

Related to these twin notions that the drama ought not be commercialized but should instead serve some higher purpose is a desire on the part of some audience members to experience Indian history as tragedy.

Patrons should come away with the feelings that they were there with the Cherokee in spirit and cry with the tragedy... You should want people to go away from the drama feeling as though they had walked with the Cherokee and felt great sorrow for the injustice. (Confidential 2006, June 12)

The Cherokee have indeed suffered at the hands of the white settlers, and the history of such tragedy needs to be remembered, since history forgotten tends to be repeated in similar fashion. (Confidential 2006, August 9)

This performance was an insult to their forefathers who bravely tried to hold on to their land... I always left the amphitheater feeling our forefathers took the land of the Cherokee nation. (Confidential 2006, August 10)

In prioritizing which aspects of the classic drama to change in the new production, the CHA leadership was especially concerned with the representation of Removal. They did want to feature that part of their tribe's history and convey the human suffering it entailed, but they did not want Cherokees to appear pathetic or resigned to their fate. They did not want to elicit a response that one member of the Board of Trustees described as "Oh, those poor Indians!" In interview Yona Wade reflected a similar perspective on the subject of Removal, "If you look at the long history, the timeline of the Cherokees, say 10,000 years worth of history that we know of, it's a very small part of our history and it's not even the main focus of our history. Now it propelled us to where we are now and what we are. It did play a role in that, but it's not like that was the defining moment of the Cherokee people."

The classic *Unto These Hills*, by portraying the central narrative of Cherokee history as tragedy, let Whites experience guilt and then absolve themselves of it. By watching the

show and feeling bad for a little while, they could then feel good that they felt bad. This is a real, albeit limited, engagement with the history of colonization in which the audience learns to appreciate one facet of the betrayal and brutality of conquest. But once enlightened to the fact that the United States did this they can begin to feel better because they felt a little pain. Once you have felt the sting of that guilt you can pat yourself on the back because this display of empathy has affirmed your humanity and without having to confront any of the consequences colonization has meant for Native peoples. So the desire for guilt and the anger felt when that desire is left ungratified can be seen as part of White tourists' need to encounter Natives on their own terms. And that is precisely what *The Retelling* inverts – not only in the drama, but in the whole social scene of the Cherokee takeover of the CHA.

Like guilt, nostalgia is a way of positing a relationship between the past and the present that creates a frame for meaning through narrative. It is a longing, like homesickness (Stewart 1993). But what of these tourists' nostalgia? It is like homesickness for someone else's home. Whereas the nostalgic tourist is seeking in the drama a means to withdraw from the present, the Cherokee by means of the new drama are producing new and active ways of being in the present.

Exploring other dramatic possibilities: 2007 and 2008

When *Unto These Hills* was rewritten and transformed into *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* among the many changes made none were more profound than those effecting Tsali, who was cut after fifty-five years in the starring role. Some Cherokees contest various aspects of Tsali's story, which are bound up in a web of significance that is shaped by

historical documents that describe his capture and death, local oral traditions, and the way those have been represented and made public by the drama. James Bradley defended the move to excise Tsali from the drama. He described how the inextricable problem of his representation arose in the midst of the debate surrounding feedback of the 2006 show:

We had a conversation at the board meeting... the board chair wanted to put the Tsali story back in. And we started talking about it. And Carla said, "Well I know two Tsali stories." And she told one, and then Bo told one and I told one. They were all three different. We turned around and said, "See that's what you run into. Which one of those do you want to put in the show? Which one's right?"

Because my emphasis here is on the local debate surrounding Tsali's representation in the drama rather than the details of his story, accurate or otherwise, I will provide only a truncated version of his story in order to establish his importance as a historical figure.

In North Carolina forced Removal began in June, 1838, and proceeded until mid-July by which time the U.S. army had rounded up all Cherokees in the western part of the state except the Oconaluftee. Believing his task near completion General Winfield Scott ordered his regulars to the Canadian frontier only to learn in August that approximately 350 fugitive Indians – his estimate – were hiding in the mountains. With the bulk of his force too far away to call back Scott used small detachments of mounted regulars to capture the remaining Cherokees (King 1979:170).⁵ Assisting the army was the Oconaluftee, though some officers wrote to Scott with the suspicion that after capturing the fugitives their scouts were helping them to escape again (Kutsche 1963:332-333).⁶

⁵ Winfield Scott to James Monroe, Nov. 9, 1838; cited in King

⁶ C.H. Larned to Scott, Nov. 5, 1838; cited in Kutsche

One of these missions resulted in the capture of twelve Cherokees, the commanding officer Second Lieutenant A.J Smith wrote to Scott describing how they turned on his men in a surprise attack killing two soldiers (Kutsche 1963:331-332).⁷ These actions are now widely attributed to Tsali and his family. After Smith's letter Scott moved infantry from near Augusta, Georgia, to North Carolina "to punish the murderers" but giving explicit instructions that the Oconaluftee were not to be harmed (King 1979:173).⁸ The Oconaluftee again assisted the army, this time in its pursuit of Tsali. Colonel William Foster wrote to Scott that after two weeks eleven of the twelve had been captured of which three had been executed by the Cherokees. Three days later, he wrote, "'Old Charley' [Tsali] himself was finally captured and executed by Wa-chee-cha & Euchella." Foster also reported that of the 31 fugitive Indians that acted as his scouts all were family and neighbors of Euchella and that for their service Foster chose to release them rather than take them to the stockades to await Removal. He wrote that they, "pursued, captured, and finally punished the outlaws and murderers – in consequence of which, I permitted them to stay in the mountains" (King 1979:175).⁹ King concludes, "The widely held belief that today's Eastern Cherokees are descendants of those who fled to the mountains and eluded federal troops in 1838 is a distortion and oversimplification of a very complex episode in Cherokee history."

The only group affected by the capture of Tsali's family was Euchella's band of fugitives from the Nantahala area. Contrary to popular belief, it was not Winfield Scott who made the decision allowing them to stay, but rather Col. William S. Foster, who found it necessary to justify his action in his report to Major General Scott. Furthermore, it was not a voluntary sacrifice on the part of Tsali that permitted the fugitives to remain, but rather the fact that the fugitive Euchella's band, though at first unwilling, eventually tracked, captured, and executed the murderers. (1979:176-177)

⁷ A.J. Smith to Scott, Nov. 5, 1838; cited in Kutsche

⁸ Scott to Monroe, Nov. 9, 1838; cited in King

⁹ William Foster to Scott, Dec. 3, 1838, quoting letter of Nov. 24, 1838; cited in King

King's account of the Tsali story, although available in a text popular among tribal members, is not widely circulated. Today many Cherokees believe that Tsali sacrificed himself to secure the Cherokees' right to remain in the east and that this is the formative moment of the Eastern Band. The anthropologist Paul Kutsche writes that in this legend Tsali becomes like, "a combination of George Washington in making possible the founding of his state, and Jesus Christ in dying a martyr to the foreigner so that others might live" (1963:343).

While published versions of the Tsali story circulated prior to the advent of *Unto These Hills* (Lanman 1849, Mooney 1992), the drama has had the most profound effect in shaping his contemporary significance. In the classic drama's performance Tsali and his family take center stage late in the play at Scene 10, which depicts the Army's roundup of Cherokee into stockades to await Removal. In this scene two drunken soldiers mercilessly beat his wife murdering her, and Tsali and his sons kill them in retribution, fleeing into the mountains as American soldiers fan out to capture them. A bargain is made between the Army, represented by Major Davis, and the Cherokee, represented by Junaluska, and in Scene 11 the supporting characters Drowning Bear and Will Thomas find Tsali and speak with him, but he angrily rejects their overtures. Later in Scene 12 Tsali and his sons do surrender, he delivers an inspiring speech before his tribe and then willingly exits with a firing squad to meet his fate just prior to their departure along the Trail of Tears.

In 2006 on the Fourth of July, the biggest weekend of the year, an area newspaper ran an opinion piece titled, "Authenticity often doesn't lend itself to good drama" (Carden 2006, June 28). In it the author describes his first experience seeing the drama in 1952 and contrasts it with the experience of being a Cherokee tribal employee for fifteen years during which he

learned that the legend of Tsali does not match the historical record. In light of the new drama, he conceded that “the old drama is a colorful and sentimental hodge-podge of what the non-Native American dramatists think is Cherokee.”

Perhaps so. However, since I grew up to become a playwright myself, I know that what is ‘good drama’ is not always ‘good history’... Maybe it needs a facelift since it has definitely lost the bright-faced luster that it had in 1952. However it may be that the worst fate that could befall it is to become ‘authentic.’

In the office Linda West, the CHA’s executive assistant, and I read the piece and chatted about it. When James passed by we showed it to him. “I already read it,” he said curtly.

“What did you think?” I asked.

“I think he’s an idiot.”

“Why?”

Exasperated James stammered and hesitated for a moment, then went on a tear for about twenty minutes dissecting and detailing and theorizing what he called the “obsession” some non-Indians have with *Unto These Hills*. James began his critique by squarely placing the author’s reverie of the old show in the context of the writer’s own memory. Thus when the author describes the glow of the drama in 1952, James argued, what he is remembering is the experience of being a young man having a special day with his family. So there is not only the warmth and pleasure of an experience shared with loved ones perhaps now deceased, but also a man seeking to avoid the pain of growing old, seeking solace in a performance that reminds him of his youth.

James snatches the article off my desk, scanning it, tearing into each of the author's observations in short order. The author describes Tsali as a hero, which is strange that he would heap accolades upon him unselfconsciously since he just acknowledged that Tsali's hero status is entirely mythic. James, however, is dead set against representing Tsali as a hero. Instead he refers to Tsali as a troublemaker and screw up who almost "blew it" for his fellow Cherokee.

"Who is Tsali a hero to?" James demanded, "Who gets to decide who our heroes are?"

In 2007 James stepped down as executive director of the CHA and a second all-new script was commissioned to address the many concerns raised by tourists and locals. As with the 2006 script, one of the principal efforts of the 2007 show was to bring what the Board of Trustees thought was a Cherokee perspective and sensibility to the drama, but this time the board wanted to salvage Tsali and get the details of his story "right." For example, in the classic script Tsali surrenders and accepts his fate at the hands of a U.S. military firing squad, embodying the noble savage stereotype. However according to historical documents left by the U.S. military, as well as local oral tradition, it was the Cherokee who captured Tsali and executed him.

In February of 2007, about three months before the season's premier, a script meeting was convened in the CHA's boardroom to make necessary changes before casting and rehearsal. This year the script was given to two non-Indian Hollywood television writers, Pat and Ben, who had a positive relationship with the tribe for having helped design some exhibits for the local museum.

Ben enthusiastically pitched their new representation of Tsali. “Act Two grabs you by the heart and never lets go. There’s going to be tears, but we’ve got to massage the Tsali story. Based on what everybody has told us and based on a really well written out treatise points by Barbara [Duncan] we were able to get something, I felt, that really hit you hard in the heart just by telling the facts as they were.”

One tribal member voiced her opinion, “Well when I read it, it seemed like the story of Tsali was just rushed through.”

Yona chimed in, “I think one reason for that is that the story of Tsali is not as clear. When we met last we said, one group thinks this happened, another group says this happened. You can read through the papers and it says this happened. So it’s to introduce him, tug at those heart strings, but not definitively say: this is what happened.”

Pat empathized with the sensitivity of the issue, “Even though Tsali lived at one point, some people still believe what happened in the drama.”

Ben was confident there was enough to work with dramaturgically, “Cherokees had to kill Cherokees to keep other Cherokees here, and that’s a powerful story point. We can elaborate on that. To make the real, hard, dramatic point and shock people. Because they’re not going to see that coming.”

The 2007 show overflowed with ideas as the scriptwriters tried to satisfy multiple constituencies by including in one 90-minute show scenes from pre-colonial, colonial, early American, and Removal period Cherokee. Tsali made a brief appearance at the end of the drama. This time it is Tsali’s friends Euchella and Wachacha who capture him and execute

him. However, even with the inclusion of Tsali, the bottom line for the 2007 performance was not promising as attendance dipped sharply.

In the spring of 2008 I called the CHA, certain that the previous season's downturn would motivate the management to plan more changes. The question was, to my mind, where would they turn their attentions? I perceived the struggle over the content of the drama as analogous to the swing of a pendulum between two poles representing the interests of the tribe on the one hand and the tourists on the other. The classic drama had completely privileged the desires of the tourist audience, so much so that some Cherokees came to see the drama as largely irrelevant to their lives. By contrast the 2006 production represented an almost militant reclamation of the drama made manifest in its non-linear storyline, confrontational tone, and Geiogamah's interpretation of Cherokee symbolism. The pendulum had swung to the other side with the drama excluding some tourists and Cherokees who had internalized the version of history presented in the classic drama. These audience members were very vocal in their displeasure at the 2006 show and this was deeply unsettling to the CHA leadership who are responsible not only for sculpting the public face of Cherokee history and culture to the outside world but for managing a tourist attraction that successfully appeals to the widest audience possible. So new scriptwriters were hired for 2007 and the pendulum began to swing back the other way. Would the CHA attempt to strike a balance among these competing interests?

I called the CHA in April 2008 and took to chatting with Linda West again. After making small talk about our kids and the price of gas I began to probe what they had planned for the new season.

“So are they making changes to the drama again?” I asked her.

“Yeah. My script’s a little bit different,” Linda said. Her comment sailed over my head like a boomerang, lingering in the distance before coming back and striking me from behind.

Taking a shot at writing a new version of *Unto These Hills* was like a dream come true for Linda. She told me, “That was the answer to the question people always ask when you’re growing up, ‘What do you want to be when you grow up?’ I wanted to be a writer.” Having grown up in nearby Cherokee County, North Carolina, living on the Cherokee reservation for the past twenty years and raising three children enrolled in the Eastern Band, Linda, a non-Indian, never took the drama at face value in her adult life. As a child she was moved by its tragedy and cried for Tsali’s sacrifice, but that changed as she matured.

“I always questioned it,” she told me. “And then as I got older – really, I’m a big history buff – I became aware of the inaccuracies in the portrayal of events. Especially the Tsali stuff was way, way off.”

Her experience of the drama differed from what she perceived as the Cherokee community’s general acceptance of it. “I think that the people just really took it for what it was. You know, a lot of people are not into researching. If they see something presented then they think that that’s it. And I think that a lot of people actually thought the old drama, the story of Tsali, was fact. And it was just through the generations, because it’s been around so long, everybody from the time they were children grew up thinking, ‘Yeah, this is our story.’ When now we know from records and documents that some of the stuff was not accurate.”

Tsali had heretofore been represented as a fiery young buck, but Linda began altering the script by making him an elder with married children and a grandson. Instead of being a Cherokee refugee, Tsali is portrayed as one of the citizen Indians exempt from Removal. Rather than attacking an American soldier in retribution for killing his wife, a soldier is accidentally shot when one of Tsali's sons scuffles with him when he stubbornly refuses to acknowledge their exemption. In the classic show Tsali burned with racial hatred directed at the Whiteman for driving the Cherokee from their homes, this elderly Tsali frets over his son's rash behavior. "Things have gone very wrong here," he says at the soldier's death. These details are not historically accurate but solidify Tsali's importance by making him one of the Eastern Band.

In the 2008 show, after Tsali's family's flight, an officer appears before Drowning Bear and Will Thomas to make his bargain for Tsali's capture. Euchella and Wachacha are forced to comply because the Army has already captured their families. Only if they find and execute their friend will their families be released. When Euchella and Wachacha find Tsali and his sons they are in anguish as they lay out the American's bargain, telling him of their families held hostage by the U.S. Army. The American soldiers are not far behind and when they catch up, they demand Tsali's immediate execution. Tsali makes his last request, that Euchella and Wachacha dispatch him and not the Whiteman's army – his death then becomes an act of defiance rather than a resigned embrace of destiny. It is only with great torment that Euchella and Wachacha accept.

Even with high gas prices ticket sales went up two and a half percent in 2008. I spoke with the CHA at the end of the season and folks seemed confident that they had found their winning script, this time written by their executive assistant. Perhaps the details are not one

hundred percent accurate, the myth of Tsali does persist and it makes me think that the CHA's earlier calls for improving the drama by correcting historical inaccuracies are not unlike Roland Barthes' (1972) notion of alibi. Historical inaccuracies, as important as they may be were only one issue and in certain circumstances came to take backseat to broader debates about the meanings of the drama. To echo James, who gets to decide what our inaccuracies are?

Summary conclusion

For communities that are exposed to substantial poverty or that have historically catered to industries that are now faltering, tourism, like gentrification, is often promoted as an unproblematic panacea for economic growth. However the tourism industry places multiple stresses on its host population including service jobs where boredom and repetition are synonymous with catering to tourists and locals seek to cope with intrusive behavior from tourists. In areas such as Cherokee, North Carolina, where the tourist presence is massive communities must deal with the sheer physical burden of crowding, trash, traffic, and pollution. Tourism seldom provides steady and secure income and a community that bets its economic future on the tourism industry is taking quite a risk. Tourism is usually seasonal, forcing workers to seek out alternate sources of income in the off-season, and it can be unpredictably sensitive to external factors beyond the community's control such as the state of the national economy and the price of gas. In instances where a small sect of outsiders benefits disproportionately to the native population tourism can come to resemble extractive colonialism (Nash 1989).

However an anthropological analysis of tourism cannot rest with political-economy because the nature of the exchange is also symbolic and permeated with meaning especially issues of nationalism, identity, social status, and history. With the rise and fall of different types of tourism in Cherokee, North Carolina, and in light of growing tribal sovereignty and federal policies of self-determination, Cherokee history and culture has acted as a means to challenge and build upon social relationships within and outside of the tribe. With material conditions in Cherokee society changing new political and cultural exchanges with the outside world become possible. The drama makes an intriguing example for study because tribal members hold a wide range of opinions about it and these dispositions may change over time, making the drama thoroughly ambiguous and polysemous.

Symbolism and political-economy may even intersect in productively interesting ways as in the social significance of the theater as a unique place on the reservation. Cherokee, like many other tourist towns, is spatially structured so that the tourists have easiest access to only certain areas of the community. This strategy is echoed in the Eastern Band's display of culture and history too. Valene Smith terms attractions such as the village and drama "model cultures" and notes that they "have the great advantage of structuring tourist visits to a site away from the daily lives of ordinary people" (1989:11). Unaddressed by Smith and others who explore similar attractions elsewhere is whether this separation continues to be significant when locals attend cultural attractions. Conducting an ethnographic inquiry into tourism may offer the opportunity to develop such a critique of the relevance of tourism to culture and the impact of tourism on a given society. Dean MacCannell (1976) suggests that late capitalism has made us all into tourists of a sort because the alienation that Marx diagnosed at the heart of the capitalist exchange of labor for

a wage to purchase commodities has made the West into a culture of voyeurism. He forwards the theoretical argument that tourism is a metaphorically apt description of contemporary American social life. When applied to the Cherokees this would seem to suggest that cultural tourism results in alienating them from their own culture by presenting it as a commodity to be consumed in commercial spaces and during business hours. However this may make tourism into a scapegoat and eschew local critiques that emerge when one takes a long view of the history of tourism in Cherokee.

As the Cherokee response to *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* shows, there is ambivalence surrounding the possibly of renegotiating the relationship between the tribe and its tourists. Some feel that given the atmosphere of collective “renaissance” on the reservation the time is now to reposition Cherokee as a destination and potentially usher in changes in the way Cherokees and non-Indians relate to one another in the tourist exchange. Others are more apprehensive. Like other areas with a long-standing relationship to tourism “patterns of interaction have become routinized” (Nunez and Lett 1989:270) and thus some locals have grown accustomed to relying upon past experiences to guide current activities. To some the possibility of changing the quality of tourism on the reservation suggests inserting uncertainty into a situation that had previously been patterned and predictable.

One of the most productive theoretical frameworks for analyzing tourism is performance and Goffman’s (1959) metaphor of the stage is especially apt in describing the touristic encounter. In Cherokee it is a given that everyone is conscious of being on display, but tourists may be unaware of the extent to which they too are closely watched by their hosts. Both the guest and the host prepare for the encounter in a backstage area before performing the exchange on stage where their maneuvers are bound by convention

concluding with a retreat to their respective backstage. For the Cherokee touristic performance is intertwined with identity and with shaping contemporary perceptions about the place of Cherokees in the world. *Unto These Hills* and its sequels are a prime example of how theater can frame or reframe social relationships.

Where touristic performance overlaps with performativity there are opportunities to explore further the relationships between a particular pattern of capitalist exchange and identity. Eastern Band Cherokee society is a diverse one consisting of a population of tribal members that display great physical, political, economic, and religious variation; it also includes their non-Indian family, friends, and associates. The Cherokees who spoke with me expressed an equally wide-range of opinions about the drama and the way their history and culture is represented for tourists. Given the scope of the differences expressed it is understandable that *Unto These Hills... a Retelling* has elicited both praise and condemnation. Perhaps it is impossible to assume that any community could ever agree on a single version of their history. Yet it was the goal of the CHA to rewrite the classic drama such that it presented a historically accurate story, an important task considering the depth of errors showcased in the classic drama. There are other efforts on the reservation where a desire to clear up outsiders' misunderstandings has led some to extol the benefits of conveying a single, unified perspective of the Cherokee. For some tribal members this is perceived as effort to impose a homogeneity that does not exist. One artist friend of mine dismissed this and other projects by the tribal government to "standardize" the presentation of culture as reducing the tribe to "the Eastern Bloc of Cherokee Indians." Since its inception tourism has been for the Cherokee an arena for struggles within the community including moments when public debates become opportunities for local elites to jockey for position in

promoting whatever might benefit them. While mitigating the risk of confusing or misinforming the tourists is a legitimate and reasonable concern, the discourses about how that is to be done are also ways to maintain control over the meaning of the drama. Not just in terms of the narratives it portrays but of the role of the theater in the community.

A unified representation of Cherokee history and culture that is accepted by all tribal members is an unlikely outcome given these ongoing debates among Cherokee subgroups over which versions of the past should be legitimated. Working in tandem with the drive to present a historically accurate story is an insistence on separating performances deemed “Cherokee” from those that are deemed “Indian.” Pan-Indian themes and dances such as powwow are accepted by tribal members and even enjoyed in their designated time and place. But for some Cherokees it is considered inappropriate or at least misleading to mix “traditional” Cherokee and pan-Indian dances. One interesting outcome of this has been the development of the Festival of Native Peoples, an annual event held during the height of tourist season when eastern and western tribes, as well as Alaskan and Latin American natives exhibit their own tribal dances in juxtaposition but without competition. There are many tribes represented at the festival but the performance is not a powwow, the dances may be invented traditions or they may verge on the ceremonial, and their talent may be virtuosic or amateur.

In seeking to promote uniform standards for the display of culture and history the tribe is also seeking to foster a unified national identity. Additionally it is seeking to redefine cultural tourism on the reservation into something that Cherokees can embrace as relevant to their own lives. Thus in the relationship between the new drama and Cherokee identity we see an attempt by Cherokees to negotiate their place in the American national landscape. This

is present in the glorification of local heroes in the drama, making the local into the national. Struggles over the control of representation become linked to struggles to preserve sovereignty from outside threats and to build a twenty-first century nation of the Eastern Band Cherokee. Many of these same nationalist functions are recognizable in “monuments” more generally. By choosing to present only certain events or narratives of the past the tribe is negotiating its entry into certain futures. The great importance of the drama for the future of the Eastern Band as conveyed, for example, in its uplifting rather than tragic conclusion.

For many Cherokees the opinions of tourists are an inescapable evaluation of economic success and self-worth. Just as Cherokees’ opinions of the drama have changed over time so have the opinions of outsiders. For some older tourists the drama evokes a nostalgic rush of America from the 1950s-1980s, while younger tourists may perceive it as “cheesey” and be suspicious of the outdoor drama art form as too dated. In the marketing of the drama there is a pervasive sense that it is supposed to be “educational” and appeal to families with children. Although this has been changing through the generations, tourists still want Cherokee difference to be both entertaining and safe insofar as they hope to view unique Cherokee “traditions” and not a non-Christian Cherokee “religion.” Over the years one of the most important functions of the drama has been to enact an “aestheticization of tradition” (Adams 2006), streamlining and packaging Cherokee culture and presenting only a few iconic images and scenarios. Through this process of staging culture dances that were once performed only in specific contexts and under certain conditions, the Friendship dance for example, can now stand for all of Cherokee culture generally.

Tourist opinion enters into Cherokee discourse concerning the relationship of the drama to Cherokee identity. For some Cherokees not only the display of culture for tourism

but the number of tourists it attracts serves to legitimate their own position in Cherokee society. If fewer tourists are drawn to one version of the Cherokee past then some tribal members will distance themselves from that version. If tourists flock to take in another aspect of Cherokee culture then some tribal members will embrace that with pride. Whether it be objects such as Cherokee basketry or performances such as the drama, art does not simply mirror Cherokee culture but is used by tribal members to create and re-craft identity. Because art can mean different things to different people it can become implicated in changes in intergroup relations. Art figures prominently in Cherokee aspirations to enhance the prestige of their town and art can be instrumental in efforts to gain a political or economic upper hand among rival destinations such as Gatlinburg, Tennessee. I heard Santa Fe, New Mexico, with its upscale appeal, frequently invoked as a potential model for the future of Cherokee.

Performance as a process may hold a final possibility of change in the Cherokee community through their involvement as performers. Being in the show (or managing it for that matter) is another venue where the tribe is challenging and adjusting its relationship with the non-Cherokee world. I would like to see the sense of community backstage harnessed for political purposes to promote communication and understanding between Indians and non-Indians. The power of performance is not only affective upon the audience but the performer as well. It produces a powerful sense of unity and accomplishment. Staging a show also conveys a sense of shared fate as a better production benefits everyone. Historically some Cherokees held the backstage of the Mountainside Theater at a distance and its future in the community under new management has yet to be determined. The possibility exists for the practice of theater to improve western North Carolina's understanding of the Eastern Band Cherokee and place the tribe on more equal footing with their neighbors.

Appendix – *Unto These Hills* attendance data

Year	Attendance		
1950	107140	1980	106218
1951	151774	1981	105743
1952	141771	1982	101881
1953	137750	1983	109535
1954	150966	1984	91936
1955	129174	1985	87544
1956	119117	1986	93015
1957	120968	1987	98559
1958	113748	1988	93965
1959	123062	1989	82318
1960	116436	1990	91758
1961	116675	1991	88667
1962	129301	1992	85143
1963	132114	1993	94338
1964	125353	1994	86094
1965	130354	1995	88587
1966	120201	1996	78870
1967	108398	1997	74552
1968	122666	1998	71894
1969	134705	1999	70737
1970	140366	2000	64134
1971	137655	2001	59659
1972	135528	2002	63783
1973	128148	2003	53072
1974	116122	2004	44042
1975	125348	2005	54344
1976	122541	2006	57992
1977	121451	2007	45705
1978	108627	2008	51076
1979	87205		

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